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T. Thomas Kenyon

A MODERN PLEA FOR CHRISTIANITY



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A MODERN PLEA
FOR
CHRISTIANITY

BY
LOUIS DE LAUNAY
The Academy of Sciences

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY
SELDEN P. DELANY, D. D.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

I first read this book in the summer of 1925 when I was in France. At that time almost the only American news that found its way into the French newspapers was the latest bulletin from the evolution trial in Dayton, Tennessee.

I could not help comparing that crude attack which was directed against modern science by certain widely accepted champions of American Christianity with this adroit and persuasive defense of the Christian tradition by so authoritative a scientist as M. De Launay. It occurred to me that a translation of his work might help to clarify the minds of many Americans with regard both to science and religion, and tend to sweeten the atmosphere generally.

In the summer of 1926 I had the pleasure of meeting M. De Launay in his Paris home and I learned from him the following facts, which may serve as an introduction to his American and British readers.

M. Louis De Launay was born in Paris, July 19, 1860. He entered the Polytechnic School in 1879 and became an engineer in the Department of Mines in 1884. He entered the service of mines at Moulins and at that time began the geological maps of the Central Plateau which he has continued up to the present time. After journeys of scientific exploration in the Aegean Sea, Spain, Norway, and elsewhere, he was appointed professor in the Higher School of Mines of Paris in

1889, and continued his explorations in the various European countries (especially in Bulgaria), in Lemnos, in Rhodes in the Transvaal, in Laponie, in Spitzberg, and elsewhere.

He became professor in the School of Bridges and Roads and in the School of Political Sciences, and has been a member of the Academy of Sciences since 1912. He has written numerous works on geology, history, philosophy, political economy and literature.

His chief scientific publications are the following, in order of appearance:

Gold Mines of the Transvaal (1896).

Diamonds of the Cape (1897).

Treatise on Thermo-Mineral Springs: Discovery, Utilization and Control (1899).

The Mineral Treasures of Africa (1903).

The Science of Geology: Its Methods, Results, Problems and History (1905). This work has appeared in many editions.

History of the Earth (1906).

The Gold in the World (1907). Has been translated into English.

The Mineral Conquest (1908).

The Geology and Mineral Treasures of Asia (1911).

Treatise on Mineral and Metalliferous Veins (1912).
The principal work of the author. In three large volumes.

Geology of France (1921).

M. De Launay has published three volumes of studies of the Orient:

With the Greeks of Turkey (1897).

The Bulgaria of Yesterday and of Today (1901).

Turkey as She Is Seen (1913).

He has written two long poems in verse, "Orpheus," and "Adam."

His works of philosophy and political economy are:
Qualities to Be Acquired.

Descartes.

Economic Problems After the War.

Books on history:

A Family of the Parisian Bourgeoisie During the Revolution.

The Great Ampère.

A collection of travel notes relative to different religions:

Fumes of Incense.

Finally, he collaborates regularly with two leading French reviews, *La Revue des Deux Mondes* and *La Revue de France*.

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INTRODUCTION

For nearly two thousand years Christianity has held a leading place, often a dominant one, in the thoughts of men. The documents—few enough in number—which supply the basis for its doctrines are every day read, pondered over, taught and commented on by thousands of the clergy. Those who are most violently opposed to Christian dogmas cannot seem to escape the necessity of discussing and combating them. Books written about Christianity fill many rooms in the public libraries. Its opponents have often tried to pronounce it dead and buried; but they have continued to attack it with a passionate vehemence which one would hardly manifest in disputing over a corpse! In spite of the fact that in all this discussion much may be set down to habit, prejudice, platitudes, well-worn dissertations and artificial arguments, it is nevertheless true that in regard to Christianity, its aims, its moral and social program, it would seem that everything had already been said that could be said. In choosing the title of this book I was reminded of that noble woman, in a play by Emile Augier, who once exclaimed upon leaving a church where she had heard a sermon on charity: "The preacher told us nothing very new!" "Why, madam, would he have preached what ought not to be done?" . . . I too probably shall not say anything that is very new. Perhaps the boldness of my tardy intervention may be justified by the kind of

language which I shall employ and by the neutrality which I shall at times seem to maintain—a neutrality that is fictitious and adapted to the purpose in hand, I hasten to add, like all neutrality. The precise meaning of my neutrality I shall presently define.

The modern world is given over to heated controversies, often most bitter, between Christians and their opponents. They argue, they fight, they injure each other over this disputed term, Christianity. They make of it a battle field. I make bold, while laying myself open to receiving blows from both sides, to throw myself between the combatants in the hope of persuading them to conclude an armistice, during which they may learn to understand and to know one another. One side will immediately accuse me of superstition, and the other side of agnosticism, and I am not so foolish as to hope that I shall succeed at once in reconciling them. It is not necessary to worship Zeus or Poseidon in order to refrain from destroying a work of Sophocles or Phidias. Is it not possible likewise for one to appreciate and respect the greatness and beauty of Christianity, as well as the life, joy, moral regeneration, spiritual energy and consolation which flow from it, without being actually a Christian? Is it not true that many Frenchmen are ignorant of Christianity when they would blush to be ignorant of the Renaissance or the Revolution; that they are thus voluntarily renouncing what constitutes the heritage of the race; that they see in it only an absurd legacy of the past; that the very word *God* grates on their ears and it seems to them necessary to paraphrase it? . . .

But, my opponents will say, it is surely impossible for you to enter seriously upon such an undertaking,

inasmuch as the doctrine of Christ rests upon an erroneous foundation. It is contrary to science and truth. . . . I ask them in reply, Are you so sure of that? On this point the greater part of my argument will converge. I shall not attempt to enter the realm of theology, dogma and mysteries, where my opponents would not follow me and where I myself would run the risk of going astray. I shall not try to demonstrate on rational grounds what is beyond reason. The dogmas of religion are not logically deducible like the theorems of Euclid: they take violent possession of the heart and impose themselves upon it. I shall not presume to bring the Bible into entire harmony with what we think that we know of astronomy, physics and geology. I shall be satisfied with the assumption that all our scientific "laws"—when we trace them back to their origin—rest, like religion, upon unverifiable hypotheses. They are, like religion, expressed through the feelings, developed through logic and established by their results in experience. Paradoxical as it may sound to minds imbued with contrary prejudices, religious "truth" is by no means inferior in rational value, as has been so confidently alleged, to scientific "truth."

Science also rests upon an emotional act of faith, and corresponds to an innate need of the human mind, which leads us to classify phenomena, to ascertain their causes, to arrange them in a logical order. It is because of an instinctive spiritual longing that we attribute to these phenomena a principle of order, equilibrium and stability; a direction toward an end, a finality, a simplicity. We project these upon the exterior world because we aspire to find them there,

and hope that they are there. The number of accepted hypotheses which we are in the process of scrupulously verifying is infinite. When we have gone as far as reason will take us, we rely upon what we call "common sense." There is also a metaphysical and moral "common sense" which has nothing to do with dialectics. This common sense consists in seeking as regards the conduct of life, the way we are to meet death, our understanding of duty—all the deeper problems which are really the only problems of life—a solution which will assure us the maximum of dignity, self-respect and enduring happiness, and which will, at the same time, gradually elevate the whole community.

But, it is urged, religion is not only in a different sphere from science, it is opposed to it. All modern hostility to Christianity, when it is not merely on political or non-moral grounds, reduces itself in the end to the preconceived notion that miracle is impossible and that belief in Christ presupposes the acceptance of the miraculous. I shall insist at length, perhaps at too great length, on this point, which seems to me the nub of the question. I shall perhaps be permitted to explain to that large number of people who regard themselves as authorities on every subject because they have mastered the motor of an auto, poured two contrary chemicals into a test tube, or examined the wing of an insect under the microscope, how the notion of miracle may be scientifically stated and upon what mystical substratum, too often unperceived, all science necessarily rests.

My first task will be to convince my readers that religion is necessary to man and that this necessity in no wise contradicts the reason of which he is so proud.

Once this task is accomplished I shall take up another, which appears to me much simpler.

I shall seek to discover whether among all the religions in the world Christianity is—as we indeed suppose it to be—the most satisfying to our minds and hearts, the most logically constructed and the most comforting, or whether on the other hand, as is sometimes alleged, it has brought into the world an element of degeneracy, sadness and suffering, because it is in conflict with “nature.”

To perform these two tasks successfully I shall not be compelled—as has too often been the case with Christian apologists—to ascend into the pulpit to give a doctrinal exposition of the *Summa* of St. Thomas, and to utter maledictions, unknown to them, on those who are not present. The arguments of the scholastics, however profound and admirable they may be, remain for most men trained in modern science a closed book. Modern minds have difficulty in following these arguments with interest and pleasure, and their hearts do not readily acquiesce in them.

In certain parts of Brazil the white men are separated from the native fetishists and cannibals by a river. If the missionaries should remain on the white men's side of the river and should eloquently expound their creed to the natives on the other side, in one of our European languages, no matter how loud they should raise their voices and what persuasive methods they should use, conversions would not be very numerous. Sensible missionaries would begin by learning the language of the natives and impregnating themselves with their ideas. Then they would cross the river and, at the risk of exposing themselves to blows, would seek

gradually to inculcate in the natives the fundamental principles of their religion, in a way readily comprehensible to them.

I am not here addressing myself to Christians who wish to have their faith minutely defined, as they might if they had come to listen to an instruction in a church. I have in view rather the men who have never set foot in a church; as well as others who have left the Church, but may have retained for it a vague feeling of respect, like the lingering odor of incense; and still others who look upon themselves as exiles, although they have entirely given up going to church. That is why I am beginning by going out to meet them in the country and showing them from a distance the Church as it appears from the outside.

Once again, to avoid all misunderstanding, this book is not intended for those fortunate souls who are free from perplexity and disquietude and have since childhood accepted the dogmas of religion as certainties; who are always tranquil in mind and have no more doubt of the immortality of the soul than they have of the reality of matter; who admit at the outset the good faith of the evangelists, the accuracy of their narratives, the enduring value of the spiritual messages and laws of the Gospel; and who are not in the habit of probing either the past or the future. I am writing primarily for those in whom an unfortunate tendency of mind, intensified by their education, impels them to take all machines to pieces, to look on the bad side of things, to examine the marionettes to discover the strings which pull them, to dispute all affirmations, to scrutinize all hearts; in short, for those who have been bitten by the serpent of scepticism and doubt.

Therefore I shall adopt the point of view of these unbelievers. I shall identify myself as far as possible with their mode of thought. I shall not impose upon them as self-evident truths the axioms of Euclid, if they prefer to assume with Lowatchewski or Riemann that we may through one point draw many lines parallel to a straight line, or through the same two points draw several separate lines. . . . Let us not forget that every one of us wears without knowing it defective spectacles, through which he sees merely what another shows him modified by habit, education or fashion. Every image which the mind receives from the outside world impresses itself on a photographic plate which has already received many impressions in the past. In talking with chemists or physicists, in arguing with them, we must not wear episcopal glasses. It would be better to look at things with their eyes, even though their sight is defective, and simply to put a different interpretation upon them. The most pronounced point of departure in my work will perhaps be that I am setting forth that particular deformation which Christianity has undergone in passing through the encumbered brain of a modern intellectual secularist. In doing this I shall run the risk of hurting the feelings—I keenly regret the necessity—of more than one Catholic; but I hope thereby to exert some influence upon those whom I wish to inspire with sympathy for Catholicism.

I shall not seek to impose upon these modern intellectuals as fundamental any assertions of which they are ignorant or which they deny. It too often happens that the unbeliever, when induced by chance to listen to a sermon, goes out of the church confirmed rather

than shattered in his unbelief. This is because he will have heard condemned, without examination, everything which he holds most dear, because the preacher will have ridden roughshod over all the difficulties of faith which most trouble him, and will have employed syllogisms, the premises of which he cannot accept. Everyone knows the story of the good man who could not weep after a pathetic sermon because he did not belong to the parish. Those whom I am trying to move are precisely the ones who do not belong to the parish.

I shall speak to them in their own language, as it is mine also, with the cautious scepticism which scientific research imposes upon us; with the arguments and reservations to which I, like them, have been accustomed. Modern minds are so commonly impregnated with scientific notions, even without their realizing it, that many of my readers will thereby understand me much better.

In this connection I may mention a book, one of the most beautiful which has ever been written, which presents an admirable apology for Christianity, composed by a mathematician and physicist. The *Thoughts* of Pascal have for nearly three centuries exerted a profound influence among thinking men. All our modernity seems to be contained therein. Perhaps it would be sufficient for me to send my readers to that book. Yet the habitual order of ideas in which we move is no longer the same as in the time of Louis XIV. A work of apologetics resembles a work on science or history in that it must be rewritten for each generation. A contemporary philosopher speaking to an assembly of philosophers, however well disposed they might be,

would hesitate to attempt the demonstration of Christianity, as did Pascal, through the prophecies and miracles. He would be more likely to adopt the contrary method. . . .

To sum up, I shall limit my aim to talking informally with a few men of good will, in the attempt to show them that it will not compromise their intellectual standing if they deign to look at, admire and love the Church in which their fathers have prayed; that they may even give way without fear to the impulses of their hearts. I hope to convince them that "free thought" does not consist, as they often appear to think it does, in the slavish following of a general trend, in drifting with the popular current—one day toward irreligion, another toward Rome. To be free means to show oneself capable of resisting one's surroundings; in short, it means to choose.

I take them by the hand. I speak to them as a brother. I refrain from saying anything which they cannot accept in all sincerity without an act of Christian faith. I lead them gently to the entrance of the Catholic Church; I urge them to visit it; I point out to them its plan and beauty. Here my work ends. Faith, which may some day cast them at the foot of the altar, is a gift of God and not of men. No efforts of reason will help them here. Man may prepare the soil; God will throw in the seed. My only desire is that some of my readers may be prepared, if ever the heavenly messenger calls them, to give him a good welcome.

I will add further, at the risk of appearing heretical, that it is not indispensable that one should believe in all the Catholic dogmas in order to preserve the Chris-

tian attitude of mind and to see in it the superior value of a providential leaven. I would ask of those who feel that they cannot thus surrender Catholic dogma, not to abandon me on that account. My church is open to Protestantism, even of the most rationalistic sort, and the most opposed to the general tenor of my undertaking. If in drawing water at the spring one has spilled the greater part of it, that is no reason for not drinking the few drops that remain.

In the ceremonies of Good Friday a beautiful symbolic rite which goes back to the fourth century represents the progressive awakening to faith which gradually led the Jews into the full light of the Gospel. The crucifix, completely veiled, is first offered to the silent adoration of the faithful. Then the priest uncovers one of the arms of the cross, while the prayers and liturgical chants begin in a low voice. He uncovers a second arm and the voices increase in volume, to burst forth finally in a powerful hymn when the whole crucifix appears stripped of its veil. Let us honor the veiled crucifix; the unveiling of first one arm and then the second signifies that progress has already been made toward the fulness of vision.

And I shall go still further; and my secularism permits me to do so. Let us leave the Creed entirely on one side! Let us admit for the moment that we may regard Christianity as a symbol, a fiction designed to give us rules and examples of life, to reveal to us how we may find zest in living and discover the strength that may be drawn from suffering. Even in this reduced form it will still meet the chief desires of our hearts and the needs of our minds. It sums up and synthetizes at the same time the teaching of him who,

if we refuse to admit his divinity, was at least the most divine of men; and also the moral and spiritual contributions of the successive generations which have impregnated his doctrine with their life blood, and have added to it the best that was in them. This Christian heritage proceeds from Jesus Christ and is at the same time the most precious legacy of our fathers. For this reason alone it ought to attract every man who feels that he is one with the departed whom he perpetuates in his spirit and flesh, and in communion with the sacred memory of his ancestors. . . .

PART I

THE RATIONAL POSSIBILITY OF ADOPTING
CHRISTIANITY

A Modern Plea for Christianity

CHAPTER I

THE NECESSITY OF A RELIGION

1. EVERY MAN HAS A RELIGION AND A FAITH. THE TRUTHS OF REASON AND THE TRUTHS OF FEELING. THE NOTION OF SELF-EVIDENT TRUTHS AND COMMON SENSE.
2. ALL IS NOT CONTAINED IN THE WORLD OF THE SENSES. WHAT IS LIFE? IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? THE ANTINOMIES. THE NEED OF A FINAL SOLUTION.

1. EVERY MAN HAS A FAITH

Metaphysical and social problems, as well as the problems of science, take on a different aspect with each epoch. While science carries on its work of observation, experiment and classification, the masses of the people are basing their lives on certain common assumptions which are admitted by everybody. To question these fundamental assumptions would ordinarily be regarded as precarious. In the ages gone by, these assumptions included beliefs which were hardly ever questioned. A Roman never had any inclination to doubt the grandeur of Rome; a knight of the Middle Ages found no difficulty in believing in the teaching of Christ; a Frenchman of the seventeenth century believed as a matter of course in the existence of God and the superiority of monarchy as a form of government. Such unprovable affirmations as these were real

acts of faith. Taken as a whole they constituted a religion. Succeeding epochs put them to the test of reason and in consequence often eliminated them entirely.

The age in which we live—which is not destitute of pride—pretends to distinguish itself from all previous ages as the age of reason. The modern mind does not hesitate to demolish a historic conviction, not only in the sphere of dogma, but equally in the spheres of social experience, morals, legislation, history, aesthetics and even science. The old notions of geometry are lightly discarded; likewise the notions of time and space, the moral law and the gods. To-day we are often told that humanity, after having passed through a mystical phase, has arrived at a scientific era in which it must repudiate the supernatural and believe only what it can see or reason out.

But, however the modern mind may boast of its independence, it is deceiving itself if it supposes that it can entirely shake off all the gratuitous assumptions which it ridicules in our ancestors. They are still with us, only under a different form. We cannot escape from affirming what we cannot prove. We could do this, perhaps, if we could divest ourselves of the habit of seeking to understand things, of making generalizations, of codifying our observations, of eternally seeking for the truth; if we could renounce the pursuit of happiness; in short, if we could transform ourselves into inert stones and cease to be men.

The modern man loves first of all to reason. But logic is a rope which we cannot climb unless it is fastened to something. If we follow the Cartesian error and pretend to reduce everything to logic, we are

acting like a child who tries to lift himself by lifting the stool on which he is sitting. It is like a cat chasing its own tail. The mind which obstinately insists on rejecting everything that it cannot prove is necessarily bent on destruction and ends in a void. Moreover, this is not the type of mind which hesitates and recoils when it discovers that it has reached the edge of a precipice.

Nevertheless, even the modern man must recognize the need of stability, of equilibrium, of certainty. Reasoning in a circle always ends by making him dizzy. At all costs he must get out of this maelstrom.

Men will condemn Christianity, suppress God and morality, rail at the solidarity of the race and human progress. But at the moment when they are about to plunge to the bottom of the sea they seize upon whatever piece of wreckage they can grasp, and construct out of it a new religion based on the idolatrous worship of Beauty, or of what they call the Truth.

This latter solution is the most popular with the modern man, who insists on shaking himself free from every metaphysical shackle in order that he may devote himself to his favorite distraction, the study of science. He boldly assumes without any proof that every fact has a cause, that the external world exists and is accurately known by us through our senses, that humanity obeys unchangeable physical laws, that the direction of life is progressive. A worker in our factories will make the additional assumption that socialism may be relied upon to bring about universal happiness. This collection of assumptions is the religion of the day; it is the popular faith. I am using the word *faith* in the sense of an emotional and unreasoned

belief in an unverified statement; and *religion* in the sense of coördination of these acts of faith in a doctrine implying a rule of life. As long as men remain men, and until they cease to use their senses in order to understand the world, they will continually go round in such vicious circles.

I insist on this idea, that every assertion that a truth is evident constitutes an act of faith. What we admit as evident varies according to the individual and the age. It is this fact which explains the bitterness of some of our discussions and shows why they cannot possibly end in agreement. We may discuss without rancor with a man who reasons differently if we can show him that his reasoning is not in accordance with the principles of logic common to the majority of men. But we can scarcely fail to be angry with one who obstinately refuses to admit what everybody considers as evident. Go to the bottom of algebra, physics or chemistry, and you will find that the most subtle lines of reasoning—which we might suppose would be free from this necessity—will all rest ultimately, as on a *caput mortuum*, on a certain number of self-evident truths which are not demonstrable.

When we state, for example, as a scientific fact that bodies expand under heat, because our senses give us the subjective impression of such expansion, we are really making an act of faith in the sensitiveness of our nervous system. It is because of our sense impressions that we assume that the heat is the real and only cause of the expansion which we have observed. In short, we suppose that heat always and everywhere produces the same effect. To take another example: it was for a long time an act of faith to affirm that

through a point there could pass only a single parallel to a straight line. To-day geometricians do not hesitate to base their calculations on an inverse affirmation. Scientists tell us that there is no effect without a cause. Thus they suppress God or reduce him to an impetus which set the universe in motion. But what if there were, unknown to us and in spite of appearances, effects without a cause, or effects of which the cause was a will? . . .

In making this reservation we pass from physics to metaphysics; because on the other side of the physical begins, whether we like it or not, a metaphysical world where our senses cannot penetrate. Here we encounter only obscurities from which we seek to escape by the aid of a succession of self-evident truths, and inasmuch as we are prone to believe it "evident" that our brain must be capable of understanding everything, we are stupefied and indignant because these self-evident truths sometimes appear to us to be contradictory to each other. I have already had occasion elsewhere to remark that through a singular prejudice this conviction, this gratuitous faith in the omnipotence of the human reason, is particularly strong among those who accept, as if it were another dogma, the theory of evolution. Man seems to them to have attained to omnipotence in the present phase of his evolution; it does not occur to them that according to their own theory he has a chance to mount still higher, just as he has progressed in intelligence since the time when he was like a snail. The same assurance, which is by no means the monopoly of anti-Christians, exists also among theologians who think in the terms of the scholastic philosophy. To them it is not open to doubt that God

has given to man a reason capable of penetrating to the depths of the divine Being. They at least base their logical deductions on a revelation which serves them constantly as a guide.

We here touch the quick of a double human tendency: on the one side to affirm those truths as self-evident into which reason cannot penetrate; on the other, to pretend blindly that they are in accord with reason. I state this fact; I do not discuss it. To discuss a fact is always puerile. I shall confine myself to the statement that for our mind as it is constructed the truths of feeling serve as a basis for the truths of logic. Error begins when one attempts to exclude feeling in order to confine oneself to logic only; when one attempts to see in logic the sole means of arriving at the truth. There are more ways of reaching a summit than by climbing a stairway step by step; one may also reach it suddenly from another height by a hop in an aeroplane. Intuition also has its value as a cognitive agent. The world is given up to the disputes of men, which began by attempts to regulate their faiths. One is therefore justified in adopting a religious faith without logical demonstration, just as we may admit that other faiths, whether scientific or social, may be justified.

Very well, it may be retorted; but these latter faiths imposed by evidence and by common sense have no resemblance to religious faith, to which you pretend to compare them; as that is a faith which consists in the acceptance of dogmas, mysteries, miracles, in defiance of sound reason. Science would never ask you to say, as religion does: "I believe because it is absurd!"

I may say by way of parenthesis that this is a phrase

very little understood. It simply expresses under another form the distinction I have just made between the truths of reason and the truths of intuition. We do not "believe" in a theorem of geometry; we demonstrate it. We "believe" in axioms, because they are incapable of demonstration. These axioms may be contrary to "common sense," as in the non-Euclidian geometry, as in the calculations of space in four dimensions, as in the theory of relativity—assuredly as difficult to believe as the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

"Common sense" changes with each age, and precisely because it is common to the mass of men it is not necessarily very subtle. I do not see that there are for common sense fewer mysteries and "impossibilities" in the "Einstein religion" (I speak here only of his metaphysics) than in the Christian religion. Nevertheless, all anti-Christians have rushed headlong into this new religion, and they are followed by many who wish to display their independence and acuteness of mind.

I grant if you will, that the function of faith—limited to the observation and classification of facts—begins to assume a preponderant importance only when we enter the realm of metaphysics; but I grant this on condition that there be included in metaphysics every scientific attempt at explanation and coördination. We see every day a certain number of solid and liquid objects falling to the ground. We might be content with announcing this fact historically as an habitual phenomenon. To generalize about it, to interpret it as terrestrial attraction, to ascribe this attraction to electro-magnetism—these are hypotheses more or less specious, as well as incursions into the

domain of metaphysics. This is a domain, be it remembered, much more vast than that which is subject to physical observation, which is itself vitiated from the beginning by the infirmity of our senses.

2. ALL IS NOT CONTAINED IN THE WORLD OF THE SENSES

The state of mind which has become general through the education that is given in our state schools—fundamentally anti-Christian and anti-spiritual as it is—compels me to insist in this first chapter on certain preliminary notions which may seem scarcely related to our subject. There was a time when men confined themselves to discussions between Catholicism and Protestantism; later the controversy was between Christianity and deism; then between deism and atheism. To-day so many men consider themselves as physico-chemical phenomena and so confidently limit even the world of thought to the domain of their senses, that we are obliged to go back to the beginning and climb once more the steep ascent of the mountain from whose height we may see heaven and God.

It is indeed a singular tendency of mind which leads us systematically to deny everything that eludes our senses and our methods of measurement. As we have in reality only one sense sufficiently delicate to enable us to make precise measurements—and those not very numerous—namely, the sense of sight, and another sense of more localized capacity, namely, the sense of hearing, that almost amounts to saying that the world would be reduced to nothingness if all men were blind and deaf. I do not exaggerate as much as it may appear, since we have recently heard it maintained

that there can be no speed superior to that of light, that the universe is limited to a finite space, the dimensions of which may be calculated by the science of optics, et cetera. In thus confining themselves to naturalistic arguments they overlook the extent to which our senses appear to have been determined and developed by the needs of life, that visibility differs according to the beings who see, that acuteness of vision lasts for only the short space of a human life, or at the most of a few generations, and that consequently it remains always defective. They forget also that the vibrations which are susceptible of being perceived by the eye occupy but an infinitesimal place in the field of vibrations of greater or less speed, some of which are revealed to us indirectly, while the greater number of them escape us entirely. We possess five senses; we might have had ten or twenty, and each of them might have given a special set of impressions and have conveyed to us the existence of an exterior world now entirely unknown to us.

Let us admit then that what they conceive is possible—a sensory system capable of embracing the whole universe; it is only too obvious that it cannot be realized in man as he is. But why this sensory system, even if it were possible?

We acquire certain kinds of knowledge through our senses, and we attach to them an excessive credence. There are other kinds of knowledge which are revealed to us independently of the senses, and they are of no less value. There exists a whole world inaccessible to the observation of physicists, a world which we can penetrate only by thought. This is the same distinction which we just made between truths of feeling and

truths of reason. This world of ideas which dominates facts and matter we do not see or touch; nevertheless we conceive it and thereby establish its existence as surely as when we apprehend this world of physical energy or matter through the impressions of our senses. But while these latter are narrow and limited the conceptions of the mind are unlimited. When we enter upon this new world of thought we feel that we are growing and developing. This need of the immaterial, the existence of which they deny, characterizes the most materialistic scientists, who nevertheless pass their days in their laboratories seeking to discover a truth from which they do not hope to derive any personal profit. These explorers are in their way mystical believers, sometimes even martyrs to this undemonstrated and undemonstrable Religion, this idol of the Ideal which they adore unawares without being willing to admit its existence.

Do we not see that everything that distinguishes man from the animal suggests questions which in turn demand answers, which have no connection with algebra or physics? How many of us can entirely escape the pressing insistence of metaphysical problems, at least in the serious hours when we leave off acting and meekly submitting to conditions in order to think? However much we may ignore them, these metaphysical problems exist: all that surrounds us is not clear or even capable of being made clear. It is difficult to deny that what is generally regarded as our chief faculty for penetrating this new world, namely, our reason, is like our senses quite imperfect and decidedly open to improvement; and this only emphasizes its imperfection. Man appears to be on the road to

understanding the world some day, but he understands nothing as yet. Like Oedipus, he meets the sphinx who proposes to him at least the seven enigmas of which the poet speaks, and his answers are incoherent. The phenomenal world as we conceive it is not final. Without borrowing the difficult language of philosophy, is it not only too evident that we go astray whenever we attempt to explain life, to separate the ego from the non-ego, to distinguish the object observed from its observer, to define space and time? It is then that we are compelled to invoke intuition, or faith.

To begin with a simple example, man can hardly refrain from admitting that there was a time when he was not alive and that there will come a time when he will no longer be alive. Between these two abysses of darkness it appears to him that his personality is illuminated for an instant while it passes under the luminous jet of consciousness. He asks himself, and is not able to answer, by what means and to what end there is developed this evanescent principle which momentarily constitutes for him the center of the world. It is not his body, which after all is merely a development of cells analogous to all other cells; but it is the consciousness, non-existent in other aggregates of cells, which in him asks questions; or indeed this unconscious and subconscious self which underlies and interpenetrates the conscious self. . . .

What then is "life"? It is rationally as difficult to conceive of this vital activity as a manifestation of an eternal energy under changing forms as it is to conceive of its creation. In order to combat religion, an axiom has been invented to the effect that nothing can proceed from nothing, and that there can be no recip-

rocal action between two principles if they do not possess a common substance. No one can prevent our setting forth a proposition contrary to these articles of philosophic faith. It may be difficult to represent to our minds an indefinite series of divine creations of a miraculous character. But is it any easier to conceive of an eternal material substance capable of taking on at certain moments personality and consciousness; a substance which possesses through all time the quasi-divine power of modifying itself by its own effort and of adding when it passes through each individual some new quality to the legacy received from its ancestors? When we are dealing with phenomena of a mechanical, astronomical or physical character, which may be represented empirically by algebraic symbols, materialism is relatively acceptable. It is no longer acceptable in the case of biological phenomena, where we constantly notice, over and above the permanence which still may be stated algebraically, a transformation which escapes algebra. That subtle something which appears and disappears with our life may not be detected by any instrument of physics or chemistry. Every individual who is the last term of a race going back to the origins of life is also personally the expression of the race, and at the same time he may give birth to new races, to which he brings a coefficient springing from himself and his own will. Life ceaselessly makes use of physico-chemical reactions similar to those found in the mineral world; but there is no proof that it is therefore identical with them.

Someone may immediately retort that life is simply a modification of chemical energy analogous to that which transforms heat into light. In this case the

boiler serves the purpose of those catalyzers which are so often used in chemistry. If the creation of life is so simple a phenomenon, I should like to be given the opportunity of being present at a spontaneous generation. But the conditions under which this experiment might be successfully carried out so as to demonstrate the theory would always be impossible of realization. For after having eliminated, as would be natural, every microscopic or ultra-microscopic germ, it would still be necessary to guard against all external vital currents, even to the barring out of all control by an observer. To this end it would be necessary first that life should be entirely extinguished in the universe; then that it should be resuscitated as if appearing for the first time. Then in what respect would this supposedly natural phenomenon be different from a miraculous phenomenon?

Let us leave on one side this philosophical problem to take up another of a more practical nature, from which no one may escape! Let us submit to life without trying to comprehend it if we can! Nevertheless, inasmuch as we are free to end it if we will, we are compelled to ask ourselves whether the pleasure of life compensates for the pain of submitting to its conditions; whether life is worth living. We see a motor car under way without understanding what it is for. We get the impression that its expenditure of energy serves no purpose. Since we can do so, would it not be more logical to stop it? If this thought sometimes obtrudes itself even on life's favored few, how much more forcibly it must present itself to the unfortunate! Is it not logical that they should be inspired to dry up forever this source of useless misery, to disappear in

suicide, or at least to renounce the vain desire to perpetuate the race? . . .

He who has no religious beliefs and yet reflects on his destiny is sometimes tempted to adopt these conclusions of despair; and I would say that without the intervention of any faith they almost impose themselves on our reason, although they are repugnant to our feelings and our instincts. This instinct, which leads the race to perpetuate itself and to the development of which the long continuance of the race has contributed, undoubtedly makes for the love of life even among those to whom life brings only suffering, and leads to a reaction against death the man whose will had at first inclined him toward suicide. Whence comes this instinct which is so freely and universally accepted as an inherent condition of life, the instinct which attempts to explain life by itself or, more logically, accepts it without seeking for an explanation?

Instinct has indeed a small voice in the matter. Reason is the determining factor. A worker would not consider himself effective unless he knew that his work was going to endure, or would be linked up with other works that were permanent. Nothing physical endures, a universe or a sun no more than an insect. Not even matter endures, which nowadays seems to be resolving itself into energy. One must be totally unfamiliar with geological or astronomical conceptions to imagine that human solidarity is an answer to this objection. It is true that humanity will endure a little longer than human individuals. But the hour of its dissolution can materially and mechanically be calculated in advance. And when the day finally comes when there will be no more men living on the earth,

of what use will all this accumulated labor be to vanished humanity? It will hardly give satisfaction to say: "They will have been useful during some thousands of years when human consciousness existed on earth." But after that? What must be the despair of the last man!

It must be admitted that life when considered only as earthly duration is pure nonsense. The instinct which impels us to fill our earthly life with disinterested efforts, scientific research, artistic achievements and intense devotion is rationally still greater nonsense. The more accustomed we are to seek for the cause of all phenomena by the method of scientific determinism, the more desperately we demand an explanation of this nonsense, the more insistent we shall be in asking by virtue of what order or what tendency (itself materially inexplicable) this human mildew has been able, first of all to appear, and then to develop and make progress on this planet.

Let us put aside all theism. Let us stop a moment and consider the hypothesis of evolution, so dear to modern men of science. Evolution, or simply change, implies that each living being adds some element to the previous substance of which it is the result. If man had not been destined in advance to become something more than an animal, he would not be, by reason of any spontaneous effort, anything higher than the brute. One does not try to escape unless one knows oneself to be in prison. By the same token there would have been no animals if some plant had not possessed the beginnings or the possibilities of a state superior to that of a plant; nor any plants if they had not been able to separate themselves from inert

matter through some essential quality which they contained. The only plausible explanation which we can give of the progress and evolution of all these beings which constitute the universe is that this universe is not final. Neither its form nor its structure, nor the laws which it seems to obey, will remain unchanged. The universe itself, like all the beings which fill it, is in process of perpetual development, in spite of all obstacles, from the initial chaos toward a determined end. The ceaseless agitation, apparently so vain, of all the passengers who have embarked on this ship which is crossing the infinite expanse of space must tend to conduct them somewhere. Matter, to which in itself we cannot attribute an end, a tendency, a desire for progress, or even an instinct of conservation, is animated and impregnated by a vital impulse that is foreign to matter, an impulse which we call divine. In the eyes of the Christian, "Man is born to know, love and serve God, and by this means to inherit eternal life."

Aside from these prejudicial questions, so many others present themselves! Speaking from the materialistic point of view, it is unfortunate that for most men what gives interest to life is that which goes beyond life. As distinguished from the generality of unbelievers, these "mystics" have a tendency to regard life as evil, because they understand it; but they think that people would be better off in some other world. The antinomies of life trouble them; and yet this perplexity procures for them at the same time supreme enjoyment, for it makes them feel that man is a being apart from matter, in spite of all the theories which tend to humiliate him, to make him part and parcel

of the common material order and to give him an excuse for renouncing all heroic effort. Do they not belong to a more advanced stage of evolution, and do they not tower above those individuals who are occupied only with sensual gratification and who seem predestined for the fate of the companions of Ulysses, whose snouts are already directed toward their sties?

Among these antinomies the chief one is the freedom of the will, which contradicts the fatalism of physical "laws," as it also does obviously an immanent and preëstablished order. Except for some logicians who are the dupes of their logic, no one will ever really believe that he is not free, or at least able to become free at certain moments in his life, even though he lets himself be led at all other times. This is a "fact" which is established for us by a kind of evidence perhaps superior to that supplied by physical laws. We shall have to discuss later the question whether a man can and ought to resist nature,¹ if he is able to do so and finds it to his advantage. I shall limit myself here to stating the problem. Man is acted upon, but he is also an agent. An "instinct" commands us to obey in order to maintain the disciplined solidarity necessary for the race; an opposite "instinct" bids us act as individuals for our own interest, but also in the interests of the race which progresses only through such individual initiative. Instincts, yes; but what is really meant by this convenient explanation? Granted that the instinct is there, whence does it spring, in the first place, and by what is it provoked?

¹ P. 175.

In the same way again we are, without knowing why, at once egoists and altruists. The "instinct" of self-preservation is in conflict with the instinct of unselfish service of others.

Quite as many insoluble problems are suggested by these two strange notions of space and time. Our material condition makes us attribute to them a reality, whereas our minds seek in vain for fixed points of departure from which we may start in measuring absolute space and time, or a scale of measurements by which we may compare these evanescent appearances.

Man suffers from life and he suffers also from death. He suffers because his life fills an interval which appears to him so brief in time; and he suffers also because he is not able to conceive the limits of its duration. He amuses himself along the way by studying the ship which carries him, and by making himself as comfortable as possible on it. To that end he cultivates his senses and makes use of instruments still more sensitive which his mind invents. Over and above these momentary practical advantages he demands of science solutions which it cannot give him; and that is one more cause of suffering. This inability of science to answer our "why's" has been called quite improperly "the bankruptcy of science." No such bankruptcy has existed for those who have never asked of science what it cannot give. It has affected only those who have been decoyed in the region of science by illusions without limits. For all these sufferings, for this pathetic feeling of impotence, only an unreasoned and irrational faith can supply an adequate remedy. . . .

I have here referred to only a few problems among many that I might have mentioned, and in a language purposely unphilosophical. The real truth, relieved of all verbiage, is that in this matter, as in everything that is of importance, we know nothing and can know nothing. Until God ordains otherwise, our brains will not be equipped to understand the metaphysical, or to approach it through the reason. That does not mean that the metaphysical does not exist. We are like children who see machines in operation without understanding their mechanism. We are like them at the questioning stage, which is the first stage of knowledge; we are not yet capable of answering these questions or of coördinating the answers given us.

The common error, the vulgar prejudice of our age, is to imagine that there is in the universe nothing that is not reducible by logic. People attribute the honor of this discovery to Descartes, forgetting that it was a legacy of the scholastics who found a corrective of its absoluteness in the revelations of their faith. For the generality of men this modern prejudice in favor of logic has no longer its necessary corrective. If they wish logic to hold its ground they should at least subordinate it to experience and begin by bowing humbly before the facts before pretending to find an explanation of them. Otherwise they will fall back into a superstition worse than all the superstitions of paganism. The spiritual life and free will are *facts*. We may differ as to their interpretation but we have no right to ignore them.

Then too it must be remembered that among the better instructed men who mold our ideas the prejudice in question is beginning to go out of fashion.

We are no longer living in the age when, under the influence of the intoxication induced by the first scientific discoveries, people believed everything was reducible to algebraic formulae. The development of biological studies has demonstrated the necessity of giving greater flexibility to our explanations. As so often happens in the world of thought, the scientific materialism which a half century ago characterized the greater minds has to-day percolated through to the inferior ranks of the half-educated—politicians, school teachers—who attain to the opinions of the keener thinkers after a delay of about ten years.

Admitting the impossibility of answering scientifically and rationally all the questions which do not concern the immediate interrelation of phenomena, what attitude should we adopt? Many think, and it is undoubtedly their right, that we should leave on one side all unanswerable questions, just as we might avoid approaching the forbidden chamber of Bluebeard. The metaphysical not being rationally comprehensible, we should ignore the metaphysical. Life has neither meaning nor aim; it is enough that we should live on without concerning ourselves with what is to come after, which must be annihilation. The animal browses in the pasture without seeking to explain free will; we have only to act sensibly like an animal. . . .

But that is precisely what we are not—or rather are no longer—animals! Are we to tell him who has climbed the towers of Notre Dame to gambol and run about freely as if he were below on the ground? If he wished to do that, he should not have climbed! Moreover, those who advocate this abstention from questioning are generally the very first ones to adopt in

their everyday lives an opinion which does not proceed from the reason, and to which they adhere as tenaciously as do those who have not thus abstained. They admit implicitly that the domain reserved to metaphysics does not exist, or they conduct themselves as if it did not exist. They solve the problem by the methods of absolute materialism. We prefer to admit that the two domains of the physical and the metaphysical are quite distinct, but both equally real, and that they should be explored by two different methods. For the physical world we reserve, I do not say the truths of observation which may exist in the spiritual domain as well as in the world of the senses, but the truths of reason; and for the metaphysical the truths of intuition, which include the truths of religion. Like our adversaries, but with a full knowledge of what we are doing, we begin with an act of faith. They deny and we affirm; and the reason has nothing to do with our contradictory decisions, because they as well as we have appealed to feeling and intuition in order to attain to certainty and stability.

To sum up, if we are to limit our religion strictly to the worship of the goddess Reason alone we must follow scepticism to its logical conclusion and believe that we shall escape only by progression in a spiral according to the teaching of Descartes or Nietzsche. We must descend to the bottom of the abyss, seat ourselves, fold our arms and await death, saying: "We can affirm or deny nothing, neither the ego nor the non-ego. The mirage of our life unfolds in a mist of incomprehensible chimeras. All action like all curiosity is vain." Or else we might by an effort which itself constitutes an affirmation try to abstain from thinking

and reduce ourselves as far as possible to the animal state. So complete a scepticism, however, would rarely entice a fellow-countryman of Molière who prefers to think that he has sufficiently proved the reality of motion by walking. This "faith in scepticism" may satisfy a foggy country like that of Kant, Schelling and Fichte. A Frenchman will always prefer the affirmations of common sense, that is, of feeling. Deep down in our hearts and in spite of all the disquietude of our minds we *believe* in the reality of the external world described by science. But let us recognize also that the thinking soul as distinct from matter and its inherent free will are truths of common sense! When I am struck by a club, no argument will make me seriously doubt that I have a body. When I come upon an act of hidden devotion, or when I feel deep emotion before the Acropolis or the "Night Watch" of Rembrandt, I am quite as convinced that the sensation which I feel is something more than merely carbide of hydrogen.

Science leads man to ever higher levels from which he discovers more and more distant horizons; but in spite of the fact that science makes such distant horizons visible they remain enveloped in the same haze. The man who dwells on the plain, surrounded by trees and houses, is ignorant of them; science reveals them to him; it incites him to still further investigation; but it can never destroy the mystery of the horizon. In attempting to establish the continuity of the universe, science is compelled to break it up artificially into conventional segments. The physical world as we know it appears deformed by this algebraic apparel. It is no longer a living body, but a

corpse to which a current of electricity gives the appearance of life on the cinema screen.

Our limited minds demand links, transitions, rigid boundaries which it artificially supplies. Running through this humanly devised rigidity, this illusory continuity, there appears from all sides a movement which escapes detection by optical instruments and is accessible only to faith.

CHAPTER II

THE CHOICE OF A RELIGION THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRISTIANITY THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION

THE VALUE OF WORSHIP AND OF DOGMATIC PRECISION IN ESTABLISHING THE RELIGIOUS IDEA. THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGIONS. THE RELIGION OF NATURE AND THE REACTION AGAINST NATURE. THE NEED OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM TO MAKE RELIGION COMPREHENSIBLE TO MAN. THE RELIGION OF THE INCARNATION RECONCILES THE HUMAN AND THE DIVINE. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

Up to this point I have devoted myself mainly to demonstrating that man cannot do without a faith, even when he declares himself to be most hostile to all religious faith. This faith is indispensable even for the study, classification and coördination of physical facts; it is still more so when we approach the metaphysical realm, at the entrance to which all reasoning based upon the impressions of our senses must come to a standstill. Man does not realize that he is thus limited in his understanding. He wishes to understand everything and it is difficult for him to admit that anything could be beyond his intellectual grasp. He stands in need of a religion which will supply him with these explanations and answers; or at least, if the term religion should appear too precise and is ordinarily understood in another sense, of a religiosity. Only religion can enlighten him regarding the deeper laws to which in the last analysis the

visible and tangible particles of which matter is composed are obedient, as well as regarding the imponderable forces the knowledge of which we acquire without the aid of external sensations—by induction, feeling and thought. All science which claims to reason from effects to causes is a religion.

This need may be embarrassing to the reason, but it is undeniable. Our adversaries call this relying on crutches for walking, but they do not perceive that they also make use of still greater crutches. But I mean now to go still further and to pass from this vague religiosity to a formulated religion, from an almost unconscious spirituality to a cult. From this point onward the divergences between believers will become accentuated.

Not all skulls are constructed alike. One of the best arguments for questioning the absolute value of the human reason is that it is so plainly influenced by race, environment, generation and sex. Among the human beings who are capable of thinking and choosing, we may clearly distinguish two general categories. In a broad sense, Europeans manifest an innate taste for unity, rule, agreement, logic, which leads them to coördinate the various acts and phases of life, to make a unity out of a multiplicity, to eliminate discontinuities and exceptions: to bring everything under a common law, to pursue a definite end. For such minds the present is but a fleeting interim between a long past and an unending future. They struggle ceaselessly against annihilation. Taken as a whole, they are active and believe in the efficacy of human reason. We find among them some who are strongly convinced of the truth of religion, and others who are enemies of

religion and equally combative. Both groups, however, will believe that they are acting logically and consistently and will maintain that they have escaped the shifting chimeras of sentiment. This will result in ultramontane Catholicism or organized atheism, but in every case the structure will be homogeneous and rectilinear and considered to be indestructible.

Feeling, on the contrary, controls the majority of women and likewise the greater number of Asiatics, of whom the Slavs are the representatives in Europe. People of this type do not pride themselves so much on coördinating their actions, although that does not prevent them from exerting their will power with energy and passion. The present moment shines for them with a light particularly vivid, separated as it is by two abysses from the past and the future. Consequently, carried away by a capricious current which pervades all their impulses, they act from moment to moment with an equal vivacity in contrary directions. The act of faith, of unreasoning adherence, which the European would make at the beginning of his logical processes when he closes his eyes as much as possible to the facts of existence, introduces itself for this other class at each link in the process of reasoning. Every sudden shift of wind may transform into an obstinate negation that mysticism which is nevertheless their ordinary state of mind, but even when they react violently against dogmatic religion they will continue to feel the fascination of other dogmas to which they will sacrifice everything through an impulse of anarchistic or Bolshevistic faith. These two types of mind evidently do not worship the same god, even

when they agree to give to the gods whom they worship the same name.

From time to time also in the same country and the same race, the religious sentiment undergoes eclipse or revival which it would be a mistake to attribute only to self-interest or politics, or even to the natural reaction of sons against the opinions of their fathers. It is this change in the religious sentiment which proves how thoroughly we are, without knowing it, under the control of our feelings and passions—even we Europeans who pretend to be so consistently rational. That is why in succeeding periods we see men flocking to the churches or deserting them with the same unanimity, the same interest, the same sincere enthusiasm; to-day they treat as absurd what recently appeared evident to them, and to-morrow they champion the same thing with ardor. The majority of human beings change in this way several times during their brief existence; they will also have in the same short space of time the opportunity of seeing all scientific theories completely reversed. It is needless to give the precise date and circumstances which have favored the great revivals of mysticism which were initiated, for example, when Christianity conquered the world, or when France breathed freely again after the long disturbances of the Revolution and the Empire. If we should carefully examine them we should often discover that man returns to God when suffering and the too-present thought of death lead him to forget his body and reflect upon his destiny; he draws away from God in times of pleasant prosperity when he easily imagines that he is immortal.

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Assuming that feeling plays so important a role, I should be entirely illogical if I were to try to *demonstrate* here the truth of Christianity. Indeed I do not propose to attempt such a *demonstration*. We do not choose our religion, even when we voluntarily change it; we receive it. Experience proves that feeling is in its own way influenced by reason, just as the opposite is often true. We do not conquer grace, we prepare our souls to receive it.

However infirm or "stupid" our reason may be, it nevertheless remains our habitual guide—a guide to which we have been accustomed since childhood, whose advice has often proved valuable in practical living, whose deductions still impose themselves upon us whenever we wish to explain or comprehend anything. I remarked a moment ago that logic could not exclude intuition. Our mind is so fashioned that we continually endeavor to bring intuition into accord with logic. It is in accord with this principle that I have begun this exposition and purpose to continue it. Here at the start I deal with the general meaning of Christianity, in order that later we may take up its critical discussion and its relations with science.

Religion is a mystical explanation; it is also a moral support and a rule of life. For the present I shall leave on one side the second point of view, which will be amply dealt with in another part of this work. In so far as it is an explanation, the function of religion changes with each epoch. Indeed men tried out many imperfect religions until the day when they received the revelation of Christianity. In an age when they had no knowledge of science and when all natural phenomena appeared mysterious, they looked to the

gods as the explanation of these phenomena. Among these phenomena they personified those forces before which they felt themselves powerless as presumably manifestations of a will in comparison with which their wills were extremely weak and helpless. Modern man, rightly or wrongly, has now for a long time failed to see in physical phenomena anything inexplicable or even arbitrary. His conviction, based upon an experience which seems to him long as measured by his own life, is that these physical manifestations are in obedience to unchangeable laws. Instead of seeing miracles everywhere, he is at first inclined by his education to see them nowhere. These "laws" in which he so firmly believes are for him either the equivalent of the divine power in which he no longer believes, or a manifestation of divinity; but they are always "laws," denuded of all mystery, and with them religion in the ordinary sense of the word can have no concern. The function of religion, so far as its teaching is concerned, must be then henceforth confined to the explanation of the only great enigmas about which science can have nothing to say: life and death, the relations of the soul and the body, eternity.

Thus restricted, is it of any use? May we not simply acknowledge our ignorance without trying irrationally to enlighten it, since the material existence of our everyday life may quite well go on without these explanations? I have already shown that it is difficult and painful for a thinking being not to put these questions, especially in those hours when he feels death descending upon his dear ones or upon himself. Indeed nobody is content with such vagueness, and those who believe that life ends with death, that the soul is the

product of chemical energy, that eternity is made up of finite parts—even they also have their materialistic dogmas.

These latter dogmas, let us observe, constitute a turning backward. Man has for a very long time been moving gradually toward a conception of the immortality of the soul, toward a view of the soul as distinct from the body, its counterpart, and as removed from the places where the bodily remains are buried and no longer subject to the material necessities of the body. The cult of the dead is extremely ancient, since we find indications of it among the earliest prehistoric races; but the Platonic idea of a soul entirely removed from bodily conditions, a soul freed even from the necessities of metempsychosis, was regarded as a step forward both in the Hellenic world and among the Jews. The day when religion shook itself free from fetishism and men ceased to tremble before the spirits of the dead and commended them to the sleep of peace in the divine keeping, that day they believed that they had made an advance. Likewise when Divinity ceased to be identified with natural forces and worldly affairs and began to issue its orders from afar and on high, from the ramparts of eternity, then the unique and universal God, the loving Father, was substituted for the numerous little evil and vindictive national gods. If we are to-day to suppress the soul and the good God, we should thereby be effacing the age-long achievements of thinkers and philosophers.

But we are asked: "Why try to understand God who is essentially unknowable? Why not be content with a philosophy analogous to that of the last pagans, among whom at times an almost Christian morality

was mingled with the worship of "nature"—the idol so dear to many of our contemporaries? It is perhaps toward the religion of some Marcus Aurelius, a religion without God, a religion of the "enfranchised mind," what we should call a "natural religion," that certain neo-pagan minds are voluntarily turned, dominated by the persistent determination to escape Christianity.

The doctrine of a Marcus Aurelius is founded on the dogma of our solidarity with nature as a whole. We are, according to him, parts of a great Whole, and we need not complain when we are dissociated from it by death any more than when we are bound to it by life. This submission to nature, which leads to the opposite conclusions of a Rabelais or a Marcus Aurelius, to the contradictory philosophies of an Epicurus or a Zeno, would appear to many more rational than a religion properly so called. It is truly a religion which they set up in opposition to ours. We shall return to this point later. It suffices now to remark that under its logical appearance it implies a fundamental hypothesis which in our opinion is inexact. Why must we submit to nature when we are capable and the only beings who are capable of resisting it? Why must we merge ourselves with the solidarity of inert atoms when we are distinguished from them by the very faculty of resistance, when the whole aim of our ancestors has been to set us free from them? Here we have the articles of a creed that cannot be demonstrated, that is in conflict with the facts and betrays a fatal tendency to eliminate morality. The religion called natural rests on a bad philosophy and a metaphysic which takes no account of

biology. To theses of this kind we may apply the words of Jean Jacques Rousseau with reference to philosophical systems: "When we consider their voices, we discover that each one has but one voice, that of its author." The Savoyard vicar was a theist. Among his modern successors who demand the return to nature, how many are there who believe in God?

Morally speaking, to conform ourselves to nature would be to let ourselves act freely in obedience to our instincts; and that would mean that we would begin with the most base, the most egotistical and apparently the most spontaneous of our instincts. Thereby we should become ferociously individual and do our utmost to return to the state of the beasts. . . . It was hardly worth while to build up a complete theory of evolution and an elaborate social organization based on the notion of progress, if progress is now to consist in returning to the state which was our point of departure.

Observe too that this religion of nature, by imposing upon us as a duty a "passivity" before which our whole human "nature" revolts, does not supply us, and cannot claim to supply us, with an answer for the enigmas which trouble us. It only tells us that there are no enigmas either in birth or death, any more than when carbon combines itself with oxygen in combustion, or when they are resolved into separate elements. A science of optics, or of acoustics, which would limit itself to denying the existence of light or of sound, or which would refuse to explain energy under the pretext that it is a property inherent in inert matter, or which would not even try to show how matter may disintegrate itself into energy, and vice versa, would

have but a mediocre success in the laboratories. Many minds would prefer the answer which religion gives as being less illusory; but which religion?

It would be painful to us and without advantage to worship the fetish of the negro, to dance the scalp dance before the totem pole of the redskin, to implore Poseidon to calm the sea or Zeus to spare us his thunder. Among the religions actually practiced on the surface of the globe or past religions of which history tells us, Christianity alone brings us the solutions that we ask for. A European is not ordinarily converted to Mohammedanism or to Buddhism. For him the act of faith, if religious and exact, will bring him indeed only to the religion of Jesus Christ. In the prevailing state of opinion he will adopt some form of pantheism or he will be a Christian. Most of those who protest against Christianity really worship the divine principle which is denied by them, for they practice the religion of Truth, of Solidarity, of Progress, or of "Nature"; any one of which they regard as an Idol having a will, a plan, giving orders and imposing laws. The belief in these mystical entities is enough to give them direction and aim in life; and thus they remain in spite of themselves linked with Christianity at the same time that they are violently opposing it. They all agree in being ardently and passionately anti-Christian. I do not suppose that I need here to compare Buddhism with Christianity. Buddhism does not deeply appeal to any except those who have been or who are capable of becoming Christian. Those who have bitterly repudiated Christianity still remain sensible in Buddhism of everything that is essentially

Christian, but in a pantheistic frame. On what then shall we base our Christianity?

I announced at the start that I wished, in spite of all contrary appearances, to assimilate religion to science. But how does science proceed when we interrogate it? It begins with this preconceived and entirely theological idea that the succession of phenomena must be rational and their explanation simple. It therefore connects them as best it can by an assumption of causality, and among many possible interpretations deliberately chooses the least complicated. If the world had been created by a complex demiurge, or even if the calculation of probabilities which mechanically regulates the disordered movements of atoms were, as the positivists have asserted, only a fortuitous chance, all our science would collapse. We are convinced of the contrary, because even the most materialistic among us hold the Leibnitzian notion of a universe rationally constructed by a mechanical and geometrical God.

When we leave science and enter the world of metaphysics we may proceed in the same way and choose the solution which is most satisfying to our minds, the most capable of explaining with simplicity all the difficulties. The Christian solution imposed itself on the whole Western world two thousand years ago with miraculous rapidity. After two thousand years, although everything around it has changed, this religion still persists; and those who reject it have nothing to propose as a substitute for it except negations. It has satisfied a St. Augustine, as it has also brought contentment to a Pascal or an Ampère. At times people have thought it dead and buried. It

always comes to life again. Abandoned too often to-day by the humble, by the "man in the street," it finds numerous adherents among those who reflect and are searching for the truth. We do not ask for any better proofs than we have for Christianity to convince us that the earth revolves around the sun and not the sun around the earth.

The Christian solution for the problems of life has this to be said for it: that as soon as we adopt it we love it passionately. Indeed we may compare the religious experience with the emotional experience that is produced by love. We do not fall in love as a result of a reasoning process; but on the other hand the love which is entirely irrational and descends on one like a thunderbolt is rare, often ephemeral. Ordinarily love is explicable, at least after the first flush. The love which Christianity inspires as well as the hatred which others feel for it—which is the obverse side of love—prove sufficiently its enduring hold on souls. At the heart of our religion there is a center of magnetism which draws to itself all the thoughts, aspirations and sorrows of our forefathers, and which consequently synthetizes for us the entire past and seems capable of including in germ the entire future.

Christianity is not, like paganism, an explanation of the physical world which might prove to be precarious, like all naturalistic explanations, and replaced in each generation by a new explanation under the pretext of progress. It offers no answer to those who ask why the thunder roars or the sea rages, but it does give a response to those who seek to know why the righteous are persecuted. It is a foolish objection to insist that the doctors of the Middle Ages were de-

ceived in matters of astronomy. The sole aim of religion is quite other and entirely independent of physical science. It is this fact which enables it, although so ancient, always to remain modern and to satisfy a twentieth-century scholar after having entranced the fishermen of Gennesaret. Even those who protest against Christianity are still imbued with its spirit; although they refuse to admit that Christ is God made Man, they are forced to agree that never was there a man more divine. Upon his teaching, which embraces all the fundamental principles which are necessary to explain, govern and give progressive direction to our life, has been for two thousand years the daily meditation of the finest spirits of our race. That surpassingly beautiful text which we call the "Good News," the Gospel, has been for two thousand years continually impregnated with the living essence, the sap, of the élite of humanity. If we experience a desire for religion, where shall we find a better one? Most of us do not have to discover it, but merely to return to it; it was ours at the beginning of life; it was taught us by our mothers; it was the religion of our forefathers.

But then, what is Christianity, since among our readers there may be those who are ignorant of it? The essential element of Christianity, to sum it up briefly for the benefit of the uninitiated, would appear to be: (1) redemption from original sin, or in other words the struggle against the animal principle—which is what we mean by original sin—and the definite setting free of the spiritual nature of man, which is made possible by our Redeemer; and (2) the gradual transformation of man through the merits of Jesus

Christ, and his development by the practice of the virtues in imitation of Christ into a superman, one of the elect. All Christianity leads back to the redemption and is symbolized by the sign of the cross marked on the skull of Adam, Adam having been the first man who had the guilty consciousness of his flesh, who realized the meaning of sin.

At the risk of falling into heresy, as did certain Jesuits who too freely adapted the Christian religion to the prejudices of native tribes, I would say to make myself understood by men of science, that Christianity gives us a religious and mystical translation of the evolutionary hypothesis. It shows us in the beginning Adam becoming man through the breathing of God upon the dust of the earth. At first Adam seemed forgetful that he was but dust; he was ignorant of the miseries of the body; he was alone and immortal. Soon he wished to know the taste of the forbidden fruit, which is sin. Here his true human destiny began. He ceased to be immortal and became the head of a race which during the succeeding millenniums was to be renewed by procreation and depleted by death. Immediately through the murder of Cain crime appeared on the earth. Henceforth the combination of the two natures, physical and spiritual, was to express itself in man by an incessant conflict. This conflict could not possibly result in victory for the soul until the day when the divine mercy was revealed in the Incarnation. Thereafter death would no longer be simply the dissolution of the bonds which unite soul and body, but the entrance of the soul into the divine paradise regained, its return into the bosom of God.

The soul which is thus set free from the flesh is the

ultimate and logical stage of that process of evolution which zoölogists have invented to account for man as coming from the animal, the plant, matter and the dust of the earth, although there is no positive proof of this process. I shall devote myself to showing at length that all possibility of human progress is based on the Christian resistance to the instincts, to the "animal" nature of man.

Metaphysically speaking, Christianity has perhaps gone too far in the direction of detachment from the world. Its adversaries indeed reproach it with having gone too far and voluntarily ignored the physical world. But that is precisely what we ask of a religion, that it throw light on spiritual realities. A pantheism which is limited to personifying or synthetizing the forces of nature does not teach us any more than science, and what little it does teach it obscures with a poetic vagueness, or on the contrary with uncalled for assertions upon those matters which we know only too well cannot be scientifically proved. The god of the pantheists may have his grandeur since he is identified with the universe, to which however he communicates a spiritual principle of order and progress which they regard as distinct from the universe; but he is so far away, vague and incomprehensible that he is of little practical help to us. The Christian God, who enjoys the same grandeur and the same mystery, came near to us at a particular instant in the past in the work of redemption, which has made him perceptible, visible, accessible and present. This act of redemption, which might have made God appear too human, Christianity has associated with an eternal past which is nevertheless not past but continually present, because

it is brought spiritually near to us by its daily and mystical repetition in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Christianity is unique in that it alone offers to man the two contradictory aspects of God made Man, whom he adores as invisible but miraculously present in the Host. This divine Presence is immaterial and infinite, and yet sufficiently near us to become a friend and a support; so vital and human that our feeble imagination may grasp it, and even poor women and little children may imagine that they understand it. Those who will not tolerate Christianity scatter throughout the world whatever elements of the divine nature they may possess, and in thus scattering them they destroy them. Christianity alone conserves and concentrates the divine in the Crucifix, which is the symbol of supreme devotion, of suffering purified and rendered fruitful.

Paganism laid hold only upon the material and physical attributes of divinity, such as power, force, light, fecundity. Christianity reveres in God his moral attributes—goodness, love, purity. These are the moral characteristics which Christianity sets before us for our emulation and for subjects for meditation every time that we enter a church.

At the same time the Gospel supplies us with a satisfactory answer—the only one that has ever been offered, to the important question—“What is the purpose of life?” Life, the Gospel tells us, has no complete meaning or purpose on this earth, because here it is unfinished. Our earthly life is a probation. We live for some years in this world in order that we may merit eternal life.

The only serious objection which has been advanced

against this answer is of a political and social nature. Those who exploit the discontent, anger and hatred which are provoked by the inequality of human conditions, those who incite to discontent in order to create for themselves a situation or a career, have accused Christianity of trying to make the unfortunate contented with their lot and of decoying them into enduring present injustices by the lure of a future imaginary reward. But have they really made happy those whom they thus incite? And more important still, what do they find to say in explanation of the moral sufferings of these people, which are so much more grievous and difficult to bear without resignation than material sufferings? To the disinherited of life they have bequeathed only the bitterness of impossible chimeras; to wounded souls they have left only despair. And is it not true that the modern fetishism of equality often ends by exalting the idle, debauched and incompetent and putting them on the same plane as the industrious and economical? On the other hand, does not the teaching which encourages industry by the hope of an eternal reward produce, even in the purely human sense, more progress, order and happiness?

This idea of probation is one of the points of resemblance between Buddhism and Christianity. According to the teaching of Buddhism the soul must undergo a series of successive incarnations until it has achieved complete enfranchisement. Christianity goes much further and reveals God to us as stretching out his hand to weak human mortals to help them and lift them up to himself, becoming Man and undergoing human martyrdom to guide us in the way we ought

to go. The sublime teaching of Jesus Christ, contained in his three years' preaching on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias and in Jerusalem, expressed in condensed form in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Lord's Prayer, supplies us with the supreme example of human living, eternally symbolized in the voluntary Sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus Christ is the God of Love, the crucified Savior of mankind.

CHAPTER III

IS CHRISTIANITY COMPATIBLE WITH SCIENCE?

PHYSICAL OBJECTIONS AND HISTORICAL OBJECTIONS. ATTITUDE OF THE
SCIENTIST TOWARD MIRACLES. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE BIBLE.
THE HUMAN HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST. DOGMAS.

The subject which is to be briefly dealt with in this chapter and then put aside, hardly to be mentioned again, seems to many, both believers and unbelievers, to be the only subject worth consideration. Is the Christian religion true or is it not true? For them there is no other question than this, and under this precise form. They demand that it be dealt with at the start without hesitation or reticence. Every attempt to carry the discussion into another field only irritates or scandalizes them; they regard it as a trick to divert the attention. They prefer that we should make a frontal attack on the problem and not relinquish the attempt until we have definitely conquered or been vanquished.

I can understand this insistence on the part of Christians. For them Christ is God and his deity is their first article of faith. But non-Christians who are proposing to reason scientifically upon this delicate subject as they do upon other subjects—are they justified in making a demand which even in the sphere of their customary studies is never really granted? Can they

refer in the realm of physics or geology, still more, in history, to any absolute and definite conclusion, to a positive certainty analogous to that which they here demand? For two thousand years Christianity has been a battle ground of controversy, as have all metaphysical theories. And now after all this long controversy Christians and non-Christians maintain the same positions, neither side having triumphed, even provisionally, as they have done for some years now concerning theories of electricity or optics. However the question is too important for us not to touch upon it, at least to attempt to circumscribe the field which should be reserved for the faith.

Is Christ really God or not? Is his teaching a revelation from heaven, or only the most magnificent poetic fiction ever conceived by man? A pragmatist might maintain at first sight that a doctrine should be judged by its results, just as we judge a remedy by its power to heal the sick. But this would be an abdication of reason to which, however logical it may seem, our mind could hardly lend itself except as a last resort. We shall begin then by stating the problem from the physical and historical point of view. We shall come back to pragmatism by a *détour* as a final argument, if we experience rational difficulty in otherwise coming to a decision. We shall thus be imitating Pascal who in a similar embarrassing situation had recourse to the theory of the wager; or still better any physicist who to prove a particular hypothesis proceeds on the basis of experimental consequences. It is somewhat the same method as we use in geometry of assuming that a problem is solved in order that we may deduce from the solution a means of solving it.

Let us enter then upon the discussion and state briefly the principal objections, which are no doubt much better known to our readers than the answers to those objections! These objections may be divided into two groups. One group, which we shall first examine, belongs to the sciences of observation, such as physics, chemistry, physiology; the other group, with which we shall deal later, belongs to that science of the imagination (which in reality is not a science at all) called history. The objections of the first group agree in opposing to the deeds attributed to Christ what are usually called the laws of nature, thereby proving their impossibility. The objections of the second group explain on purely human grounds those acts and characteristics of Christ which for a Christian prove his divinity. We leave out of our consideration the vulgar jokes of the eighteenth century, as having no real bearing on the question. Both kinds of objections then may be summed up under one head: the impossibility of a supernatural miracle, of anything abnormal and exceptional.

"How," they ask us, "could a man of good sense accept this childish legend of a God being made Man, foretold by the prophets, born of a Virgin, changing water into wine, multiplying loaves of bread, healing the blind and the paralytics, raising the dead, and finally rising himself from the tomb on the third day and ascending into heaven? After which he reincarnates himself daily, at the behest of priests, in a real presence, in the Host. . . ."

Surely all this has no relations to the laws of Kepler, Newton, de Berthollet or Gay-Lussac. I readily admit that the role of Christ as it is presented to us con-

stitutes a phenomenon unique in kind, prodigiously unique in all respects, and therefore at first sight difficult to believe. What the Gospel records as having taken place at Jerusalem under Tiberius has, it is undeniable, no historical equivalent. But no Christian, it seems to me, has ever presented the case of Jesus Christ as if it were simple, customary and normal; and it is not a sufficient reason for rejecting it offhand that it is astonishing. What a strange scientific performance it would be to deny a fact on the ground that it was novel or the only fact of its kind! They speak as if a fact ought to be able to renew itself at will! But who, I should be inclined to ask, has so far created a sun, or even what is simpler, the Alps? We are too prone to reason on the scale of little experiments which are peculiar to our laboratories; changes in physical states, chemical or gaseous, the mixing of chemical atoms with one another. Or we are inclined to reason in accordance with the proximate applications of our calculus to the stars which are nearest the earth. And yet these rudiments of science to which our algebra applies seem to conduct us in the last analysis to an arbitrary and disordered movement of atoms and electrons, which assume only an illusory regularity, because being extremely numerous their possibilities balance one another. That this is an illusory regularity may be seen by an illustration from roulette. If in roulette the red has as many chances of appearing in the final count as the black, still nothing can prevent our witnessing a long series of blacks, prolonged perhaps for an hour, which measured in the scale of eternity would amount to a century or a millennium.

Every phenomenon if scrupulously examined is

unique and consequently bears a miraculous aspect. Two identical sequences of facts never reproduce themselves. Our "laws" are but an appearance produced by a fortuitous series of analogous successions.

What is a miracle in the sense in which we ordinarily understand it? An exceptional violation of these laws, which we call natural, by the intervention of Almighty God. As thus defined, a miracle, because of the arbitrary character which we impute to it, may shock those who believe that an immutable order is an essential characteristic of divinity. It is perhaps a still greater stumbling block to those who believe in these intangible laws as in a function of nature and independent of all divine prerogatives. But in order to affirm that an eternal law has been violated it would be necessary that we should be acquainted with all the laws of nature. That would mean that we were in possession of a perfect science, a divine science. Philosophically and scientifically we are incapable of knowing whether the apparent exception to one of our customary laws has not been foreseen from all eternity either by the will of the Creator or by a disposition of the universe as determined by a greater law. We cannot tell whether this miracle did not simply have to take place, like any consequence of human free will, whenever a will obeyed by a human body performs this or that action. Therefore we cannot deny without a historical discussion adapted to each case that a particular miracle might have happened under the conditions described.

For example, death has been until now the common destiny of all men, and the coming to life of one who has died does indeed appear to contradict universal

human experience. Are we to infer then that this fact either could not have occurred, or that it is a capricious violation by God of the permanent order of the universe?

To affirm, as people often do, that a miracle is absurd and impossible is to begin by assuming without any proof that everything which takes place in this world is regulated by definite laws which are unchangeable and without any exception; it is to suppose furthermore that all these laws are at present known to us. The first of these assumptions is gratuitous; the second inexact. An order so perfect as that would be the best proof that one could give of a divine creation. We can hardly conceive of a divine Creator who is all powerful and yet limited in time by his own laws, as Jupiter was said to be limited after having sworn by the Styx. We can only say that if the world obeys the caprices of a demiurge, this demiurge in certain not very numerous instances and all belonging to the same order of material ideas would appear in the very short time covered by human observation to have developed certain habits.

Our scientific laws, being really little more than statistics, deliberately exclude exception and chance. But it is evident that an exception or chance may take place, even without the intervention of a superior will, and may take on to our observation the exceptional appearance of a miracle without being properly speaking miraculous. For example, let us imagine a marksman aiming bullets at hazard at a wall in which there is a single hole whose diameter is exactly equal to the diameter of the bullet. He might conceivably continue this exercise for years, even for centuries, without any

bullet ever going through the hole. The most approved physical law would proclaim that bullets could not go any further than the wall—until the day when one bullet did go through. In any case, we cannot affirm that a given fact constitutes an infraction of natural laws. If we interpret it metaphysically as the exceptional application of an unknown law or as a divine intervention, it eludes discussion since it transcends the realm of what is accessible to our senses and rationally explorable to our minds.

On this question of miracle we cannot but be astonished at the extent to which for the past two centuries the mind of man has become convinced of its own infallibility. For thousands of years everybody was disposed to see miracles everywhere; only they interpreted them as the work of sorcerers and demons. The majority of modern men pretend to see no miracles anywhere. Pascal still could rest his demonstration of Christianity upon miracles. A hundred years afterward Jean Jacques Rousseau cried: "Take away the miracles from the Gospel and the whole world will be at the feet of Jesus Christ!" We have here then the essential point on which we must base our discussion of the ordinary modern view of miracles.

Our science deals with immediate causes. It assumes that every effect has a natural cause; and that the same cause under similar circumstances will always produce the same effect. It is deterministic: that is to say, it begins by excluding miracles. Evidently, if we are to consider our affirmations as accurate and embracing all the facts, if we are to deny without examination every exceptional phenomenon, or account for this phenomenon by a physical explanation already

known, there can be no such thing as a miracle. Considered simply as an abnormal fact a miracle would be eliminated from science; and those who insisted on believing a fact a miracle would be necessarily regarded as dupes or impostors. But, I repeat, of what value is this affirmation? Scientific determinism is one of those numerous convenient hypotheses which are designed to guide us empirically through the apparent disorder of the universe. It is on this principle that we make fragments of straight lines to look like a curve; that given the differentials of the first order we neglect the differentials of the second order; that we apply the law of Mariotte although we know it is false; that we establish the calculations of hydraulics or elasticity upon approximate observations. A long, continued process of coördination has enabled us to devise convenient receptacles in which we may classify series of facts. We are like bureaucrats who are heart-broken over the gift of a new specimen which they cannot fit into one of their pigeonholes.

In a similar situation we realize that in order to accommodate this abnormal fact we are forced to introduce a new compartment, which for the time disarranges our plans. We soon persuade ourselves to assimilate it to the rest, and into it we hasten to throw all facts that are analogous to this new fact so that the space may not appear to be empty. A miracle as exceptional as the resurrection of the dead calls for a compartment which is difficult to fill. People prefer, when they can, to deny and suppress the phenomenon rather than leave it as an unexplained, isolated fact.

That a scientist should find himself in bad humor

when we try to make him admit a similar anomaly in his methods is easily understood. If he had every day to establish a cause all over again and to make alterations in every law which seems thoroughly established, he would no longer have any time to investigate new fields. That is why every striking discovery which revolutionizes old systems stirs up a grumbling opposition. We have seen such hostilities arising in the face of the chemistry of Lavoisier, the discovery of potassium and chloride, the atomic theory, the identification of magnetism with electricity, meteorites, prehistoric flint instruments, radium—what more shall I mention? . . . In every case they have attempted to make the unexpected conclusion conform to an earlier explanation.

Let us make the supposition, as Renan did, that the resurrection of Lazarus took place, under the conditions as described in the Gospel, before a commission of the Academy of Medicine: they would probably have maintained that the death was not real, but only apparent. If anyone had objected that putrefaction had already set in, some witnesses of a more mystical turn of mind might have been disturbed; others would have sought to show that it had been produced by some feat of prestidigitation such as might cause table tippings, levitations, or ectoplasms. When all had been reassured on this point the majority of them would have concluded that they must make a modification in what were considered the known symptoms of death; they would add the qualification that death meant the impossibility of being revived and that in the case of Lazarus this or that symptom of real death was lacking. On the whole, even if this resurrection

of Lazarus were stripped of its historical character, the majority of the observers would not have changed in the slightest degree their previous metaphysical conclusions, as often happens in controversies, because they would have regarded those conclusions as self-evident and superior to all facts which appeared to contradict them. Following the theory of Renan, they would have begun by banishing miracle from history, "because no miracle had ever been demonstrated." Applying this alleged natural law to the miracle that had taken place under their very eyes, or had been described by credible historians, they would have inferred that its miraculous appearance was the result of an illusion. Thus the discussion of miracles would have continued to go around in a circle. This would be even more likely to be the case with a fact of the metaphysical order which by its very nature must escape all physical observation, such as the divinity of Christ.

We must realize that there has been developed in our day a Religion of Science which is intolerant like all other religions. We may not dispute its postulates without exciting the indignation of its lay teachers any more than we may express the least doubt with reference to a miracle of Lourdes without shocking country vicars. This, however, is no reason for concluding that this "Science" of the popular journals is true.

But it is time to take up the historical objections. The divinity of Christ and the miracles which have been associated with it have not, it is true, anything in common with physical science; and the best proof

that they do not necessarily shock a physicist is the strong Christian faith of such men as Pascal, Ampère, Faraday, and so forth, in spite of all anti-Christian attacks. The real problem belongs to the historical order. We cannot expect physicists to appreciate in any sense phenomena which they have not witnessed, and the circumstances of which they have not been able to control. I have just said that even if a miracle of the Gospel had taken place before a scientific assembly of unbelievers it would probably not have convinced them. Still less would they be convinced by a miracle known only to selected witnesses. It is therefore the trustworthiness of these chosen witnesses which we must next discuss.

We have indeed too little evidence for so important a case! The whole subsequent history of the Church may appeal to us as a resurrection; it must be admitted that it is a resurrection only in a romantic sense and by the intervention of a whole series of imaginations, the last of which, and for our purposes the most efficacious, is the imagination of the historian. We must also bear in mind that history, like all science, follows the custom of the times. When we observe how difficult it is to determine the events of the French Revolution, or when we read on the subject of Francis I or Louis XIV the fantasies of a writer so highly esteemed as Michelet, we ask ourselves how we may dare to speak of more ancient times. We all remember the time when the German waterspout tended to obliterate all personages called legendary, such as Minos, Agamemnon, Moses, Romulus, Homer; a time when elegance and good taste demanded that we deprive a

general of his victories, a writer of his poems, and an artist of his canvases. Progressively, under the pretext of criticism, they arrived at nothing. Later on, the excavations of Troy, Mycenae, Crete or the Forum showed that tradition as naïvely recorded by the old historians was not so far wrong after all; and numerous legendary heroes, from Theseus to Bonaparte, recovered their personalities which had been temporarily displaced by some solar myth.

History, even when it deals with facts supported by documents, always remains disputable. One must never have assisted at a correction of proofs after a session of the Chamber of Deputies to believe blindly in the official account of its proceedings. The only facts which would be admitted by everybody are those upon which there was no discussion, either because they did not interest anyone or because they were very little understood. The contemporaries of the Dreyfus affair could not very well deny that it had taken place. What shall we say then when it is a question of estimating long afterwards a man, a character, an intention, an attitude? Then all paradoxes become allowable. There is not a villain in history whom we cannot reconstruct as an innocent man. How easy it would be to rehabilitate Judas by making him out to be a defender of the social order who handed over to the Roman officials a dangerous anarchist! I have just now shown with what qualifications we must accept the conclusions of physicists. But a physicist passes from solid ground to shifting sand when he emerges from his laboratory to take up the study of history!

It is then with some timidity that we proceed to

envisage the principal historical problem presented by Christianity:

1. In what way is the New Testament bound up with the Old and what is the historical value of the Bible?
2. What degree of authenticity may we attribute to the Gospels?
3. What confidence may we have in the veracity and the intelligence of the Evangelists?
4. How have dogmas been developed?

1. The Old Testament is only slightly connected with the New by the announcement of the Messiah, the account of the first sin and the prophecies. It is much more likely to be the case that the new law takes on the character of a reaction against the old and its inherent Hebraic qualities. The Old Testament is the wild olive upon which Christianity has been grafted. I will not then enlarge upon the discussion of the Bible which has taken so much space in the puerile writings of the eighteenth century, an age when they were totally incapable of appreciating the sublime beauty of any primitive writing or poem.

In the interpretation and criticism of these old texts the science of exegesis has in recent times displayed marvelous ingenuity. Occasionally in dealing with some of the easier passages it has arrived at a practical certainty, as when it has unraveled the confusion of the two primitive accounts in the actual text of Genesis. We must often admire the assurance with which a modern Hebraic scholar is able to establish by the study of a unique text how, when and by whom this particular book of the Bible was composed; or to re-

construct for us out of his own imagination events which are known to us only through this text, and to arrange them in an entirely different way from that found in the text, as if he had been present when they took place. We are reminded of those Greek or Roman historians who have reproduced for us the speeches of barbarian chiefs which they never heard and the proceedings of secret councils of the enemies who were in league against Rome.

If we go into this question thoroughly it does not seem open to doubt that, especially during the period following the Reformation, there was too great stress laid on the notion that the whole Bible was a sacred book in the sense that it was a literally exact text dictated by God. That was to offer too big a loophole to adverse critics. Such a theory overlooked the fact that every text, even though of divine origin, was written, transmitted, arranged, translated and altered by men. The earliest doctors of the Church were quite agreed upon an allegorical and mystical interpretation of the Bible, which has ever since then supplied the subjects for the stained glass windows and frescoes in our cathedrals. Origen wrote: "Who is so stupid as to believe that God actually planted a garden in Eden and placed there a tree called the tree of life capable of being perceived by the senses?"

If the eighteenth century enjoyed itself so hugely in making fun of the Bible, it was chiefly the fault of those Protestants who in attempting to reconstitute primitive Christianity insisted on relying only upon the letter of Holy Scripture. This attempt to reconstruct Christianity finally led to the destructive biblical criticism of the Germans. We should revere

and love the Bible because it has preserved for us in a marvelous and unique manner the precious heritage of the first ages of the human race, those popular traditions in which there often lingers a truth which escapes the mutilated documents of the archives! We may remark in passing how much the Creation story remains in harmony, in its account of the development of the earth, with the most recent geological hypotheses. We need hardly concern ourselves with asking whether Joshua made the sun stand still, or whether in making the earth stand still he gave the impression that it was the sun that stopped, or whether this story contains a meaning which is quite foreign to astronomy!

2. As to the second problem—which is indeed of capital importance—we again encounter the strained efforts of exegesis, its illusory preciseness and its innumerable contradictions. What interests us first of all is to ascertain whether the Evangelists when they wrote were still sufficiently near the time of Christ to transmit to us a faithful account of his life and an accurate description of his teaching. We know what a mountain of dissertations has been piled up on this subject in Germany. But the affirmative conclusion would not appear to be doubtful. The Gospels are authentic and date in their present form from the first century: first the Gospel of St. Matthew written in Hebrew in Jerusalem; then that of St. Mark; that of St. Luke; and toward the year 60 that of St. John.

Let us remember that the first three Gospels, called synoptic, harmonize with each other to such a degree indeed that it has been maintained (with good reason) that they all borrowed from an earlier Gospel which

has been lost, or at least—more probably—that St. Luke used the preceding Gospels. The Gospel of St. John, upon which there has been so much discussion, is related to another group of facts and tends to give a slightly different picture of Christ.

These Gospels were written after the event, from memory, in order to preserve the teaching of the Master after his ascension. St. Luke actually says as much. Many similar accounts had been composed, of which four only were retained, because they faithfully reported the life and teaching of the Lord. This selection was made less than a hundred years after his death by men who, if they had not actually seen him, had at least received the tradition by direct succession. They were impregnated with his doctrine and they did their best to keep it intact for posterity. If in the choice and collection of these texts they committed some errors in detail, such as would be natural in any human task, and if later apologists persisted in trying to explain away these errors, that does not in any way affect the substance of the teachings. With regard to most of the essential facts the four narratives manifest a harmony which it would be difficult to find in four sincere witnesses of any other series of human events. They are equally in agreement with the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, which complete the literary substratum of Christianity. In so far as we may be sure of any historic fact we are then justified in believing that we possess in the Gospels a trustworthy narrative of that which the writers saw and heard; or if you will, of that which the immediate disciples of Christ believed that they saw.

Most of the objections which have been raised have

to do with a combination of circumstances which is very naturally explained. In the second century the new-born Church found itself inundated with apocryphal stories which have led to all sorts of heresies. It was then by a tacit understanding that the Church adopted our four Gospels as being the only reliable accounts of our Lord's life and teaching. The important necessity of defending the sacred texts against interpolations, deletions and rearrangements made the Church attribute to them an inspired character which gradually came to be understood in too literal a sense. This was discovered long afterward at a time when men began to read with a critical independence of mind, in view of difficulties which were really trifles, but took on an exaggerated importance because of the position in which the orthodox were then placed. We may, it seems to me, sufficiently meet this difficulty by quoting the following words from St. Augustine:

The first preachers of the Gospel were Apostles . . . They recalled not only what they had learned from the lips of Jesus and the acts which they had seen taking place and the words which they had heard him speak; but also inasmuch as they were charged with the task of preaching the Gospel they transmitted to humanity the supernatural events and those worth remembering relating to his birth, infancy and youth, which they had been able to learn either from him or his parents, or from other trustworthy witnesses. . . .

Surely there is nothing peculiar in the fact that their memories or their teachings may have slightly differed in regard to the precise conditions under which the cure

of the centurion was wrought or that of the blind man of Jericho or the first journeys of Jesus to Jerusalem, or the exact moment when the episode of the money-changers in the Temple took place, or even the genealogy of Jesus Christ. . . . If it were necessary to draw any conclusion from these slight contradictions, I would suggest that we may regard them as a proof of the veracity of the Gospels. The first thing which false witnesses do who are free in their movements is to put themselves in complete accord with each other.

In a general way, objections of this sort which may have an upsetting effect upon village seminarists who are accustomed to a more strictly literal interpretation of the Bible do not seem to me to have any weight for those who have received a rationalistic education, as I suppose is the case with the majority of my readers.

The same view may be taken of certain widely held objections upon which much emphasis has been laid for half a century. They are all equally based upon the preconceived assumption that miracles are impossible. It is therefore concluded that every story of an alleged miracle is false, apocryphal or mystical. We have already dealt with this question of miracles and made clear what we think of it from the physicist's point of view. If indeed we were to reject all ancient narratives which contain accounts of peculiar phenomena, we should be compelled to question the most certain historical events, such as the death of Caesar, because of extraordinary incidents which were connected with them: *Solem quis dicere falsum audeat?* Likewise we should be compelled to deny the historical existence of an Alexander or a Charlemagne because

later various legendary traits were ascribed to them. What shall we say then of this theory that a narrative is apocryphal and constitutes a myth when it describes for us a man who felt, acted and thought differently from other men? Shall we say this in regard to Jesus Christ? Would we even admit it with regard to any superior person whose distinguishing characteristic was that he was exalted far above the level of the crowd? On this theory St. Francis of Assisi would also be a mythical character!

3. If we consider the Gospels as narratives nearly contemporary to the events, it remains for us to inquire whether their authors were truthful men and whether they were not themselves deceived. To me their veracity is apparent on every page. As collateral proof I will cite only the fact that the Evangelists often referred to their own weaknesses. Do we not read that all the disciples forsook Christ in the Mount of Olives and that on the same night Peter denied him thrice? In so far as we may judge any man by his words, we gain throughout the impression of absolute sincerity. Moreover, they record facts for the benefit of those who were witnesses of those facts, the disciples who had themselves received the oral tradition. Evidently they were describing what all the world around them knew and believed. How can we avoid giving credence to the disciples who from the first propagated Christianity in the face of persecution? Pascal said: "I am perfectly willing to believe stories the narrators of which allow themselves to be martyred!"

But, then, may not the Evangelists have been overcredulous? That is substantially the hypothesis upon which those have proceeded who refuse absolutely to

believe in the divinity of Christ because they consider a miracle impossible and absurd. Let us look at the story of the resurrection of Lazarus in the Gospel of St. John. It is impossible to twist the text so as to give it a naturalistic interpretation by assuming that he was only in a lethargic state, or that a pious fraud was carried through by the disciples without the knowledge of Jesus. Either the miracle took place or Jesus Christ was on that day an impostor. Even Renan, who always tries to show respect to the human beauty of Christ, finally came to the conclusion that he had let himself be drawn into a simulation of the miraculous. Therefore I put this question to any reader of the Gospels: "If it were not a question of the Christ, who has been the subject of such bitter controversy, but of a man who possessed the same characteristics, would not the idea of imposture appear preposterously out of keeping with all we know about him, and therefore unlikely and inadmissible?"

We find ourselves therefore always confronted with this same argument which goes round in a circle: first it is affirmed that it is not possible to perform miracles, and then the conclusion is drawn that no miracle has taken place. On this point I do not hope to convert anybody. But I simply continue to maintain that there is never, as alleged, any physical impossibility of admitting a miracle, because miracle by its very nature escapes the physical and enters into the sphere of the metaphysical. If it is alleged that it is simpler to regard Christ as merely human, and consequently more logical, I will only call attention to the many facts that it leaves unexplained, beginning with the marvelous impression which he made during his

life which resulted in the complete transformation of the traditional idea of the Messiah, and ending with the astonishingly rapid propagation of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

Perhaps also we may say that for those who hesitate to accept the mysteries of the faith it is better to present the miracles as Jesus Christ himself clearly did in the Gospels—as the reward and not the demonstration of faith.

His attitude in this respect appears to me very striking. Plainly he does not wish to play the role of thaumaturgist, or sorcerer, as the crowd urged him: "This generation," said he, "is a wicked and perverse generation; it seeketh after a sign." It is not to the eyes nor the senses that he speaks, but to the souls of men. He is not concerned with exerting a material influence, but in producing a spiritual change. To believe because one has seen and touched is of no great value and drags down the divine to the plane of physical demonstration. It is necessary to believe first, before one sees or touches; the miracle comes afterwards.

In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, the rich man, who has fallen into hell, beseeches Abraham to warn his brethren on earth that they may repent. Abraham refuses, saying, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Christ maintained this attitude after his resurrection. He did not wish it to be striking, manifest to the eyes of all, as the Jews demanded and as many of his disciples expected; he reserved his manifestations for certain selected witnesses, for those who believed in him. . . . He is not

the Messiah expected by the Hebrews, the King of glory, appearing in heavenly splendor; he is the God made Man.

4. After having given so much space to these controversial questions, we need not treat in such detail the development of Christian dogmas, in this brief exposition. The difficulties experienced in connection with this subject may be summed up in the fact that we often know the date of the promulgation of a dogma and the circumstances which determined it. Whenever the Catholic Church has decreed a dogma it has not been in the sense of proclaiming a new article of faith or inventing one, but of determining what had all along been the faith. Theological questions assume different forms in different generations. The chances of error vary. I limit myself here to citing as an example the dogma of the incarnation, which is so difficult for a modern thinker to accept, although it did not appear to cause any hesitation or astonishment among the adversaries of Christianity in the beginning. In controversies with the pagans it was hardly necessary to insist on so simple a matter, which mythical legends had made appear so normal. Later on, whenever it became necessary to determine a belief which was being questioned, after having been admitted by everybody up to that time, the defenders of the faith formulated the dogma with all the prudence and reserve that one would expect from men accustomed to treat of these delicate questions and trained in weighing their words and foreseeing the consequences of an affirmation. They had received from the beginning the oral traditions which supplemented the written text. Could a modern man do

better than trust himself to a guide so scrupulous in avoiding the errors of personal interpretation? He thus reduces as much as possible the chances of being deceived. He is spared from spending his energy in idle researches. He may well heed the words of Jesus as amplified in this passage of the *Imitation*, which so profoundly expresses the very essence of the Christian spirit: "Peace to men of good will! . . . Do not encumber yourselves with so many cares! It will not be asked of you to give an account of your knowledge, but of your virtue. . . . Of what value are elaborate researches into hidden and obscure matters, since we shall not be reprimanded at the day of judgment for having been ignorant of them? . . ."

True to this spirit, I shall not deal here with theology. Wars and violent persecutions have arisen over the different meanings which have been attributed to the word *is* in that phrase of Christ, "This is my body." We shall not here enter into such problems. It would be vain to attempt to reconstitute primitive Christianity. Branches have shot forth from the original tree, bearing leaves and flowers. To-day we are in the presence of a wide-spreading oak tree which we may not strip of its foliage without committing sacrilege. It is a false science which attempts to rewrite "an authentic work" of a thousand or two twelfth or a manuscript of antiquity, to reshape or rewrite "an authentic work" of a thousand or two thousand years ago. Christianity was first interpreted by the men of Alexandria, who contributed to it many trifling philosophical details; then it was handed over to the commentators of the Middle Ages, who introduced into it a singular mixture of naïve childishness

and a too ingenious refinement which were peculiar to that age. It was then that people employed their imaginations in inventing beautiful pious tales, often charming, sometimes clumsy, which derived from the apocryphal Gospels in the first place and were later transferred to the abiding records in our cathedrals, in which sculptors and makers of glass have written in massive characters. The structure of Christianity is all this and more, since we impregnate it each day with what is best in us. It is constantly developing because it is alive. We dissect only corpses. Let us accept Christianity for what it is: a divine work in which men have subsequently been collaborating. These men have given it the best that they had. They possessed, especially the men of antiquity, illuminations and traditions which we have not. Are we to replace, according to our taste, this or that stone in this ancient building, which has grown so venerable through the centuries? . . .

No doubt it is true that the external aspect of Christianity has been modified with the passing of the centuries, and not all the successors of St. Peter resemble him. The inner spirit has remained the same, and if a certain amount of human accretion has been added to the structure we run the risk of doing still greater harm if we attempt to correct the later additions. Catholicism represents an unique attempt to perpetuate and solidify religion. Although there are some parts of the structure that may be overlaid with error, we shall achieve nothing but disorder if we try to rebuild from top to bottom. Whether we write *Theos*, *Deus* or *God*, or in whatever vesture our imagination may clothe this God, he remains always

the same. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." . . . "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." We too, if we deceive ourselves through loving and desiring the light, shall be pardoned!

However, I do not wish to make dogmas appear too cheap. The Catholic doctrine to which I propose to adhere may be summed up, according to the Council of Trent, under four heads: the Apostles' Creed, the Sacraments, the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer. The Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer are not open to any objection. The Sacraments are included in the practice of religion which we shall examine later. There remains the Creed, and first of all the affirmation of the Trinity: that there is one God in Three Persons.

Here we are confronted with a "mystery," and those who do not like religion become indignant when brought into contact with "mysteries." But we must remember the domain proper to religion is that mysterious world which our feeble human reason cannot fathom. To deny mystery in advance is, as we have said, to affirm without proof that the world may be explained by science; it is further to assume that this science may completely resolve first causes which, since scientists attempt to avoid vicious circles, must necessarily be beyond its sphere. Furthermore, this particular mystery is not one which is incapable of a rational interpretation (although this may be a bit heretical, after the manner of Sabellius). God is always God. But that we may understand how to

bring his omnipotence within the human sphere, he may take upon himself one form perceptible to our senses and another adapted to our minds, and thus simultaneously clothe himself with an appearance corresponding, not to his real nature, but to the manner in which this nature may be perceived by man. God is at the same time the divine Essence, Word and Thought. To state it more simply, if we once admit the divinity of Christ and his teaching, all the consequences which have been deduced from it will appear easy to accept.

There was a time when people believed that they saw the divine in everything and so close at hand that they could minutely describe the least details of God's activity. We have reversed the medieval telescope, and now when we succeed in catching a glimpse of God at all it is as an infinite Being. We also tend to make of him an abstraction, to lose him in the mists of vagueness, to "undogmatize" him. We have indeed the misfortune of having been born imbued with modern prejudices. When people describe God to us with too much complacency and use phrases that are too precise, such as "God wills," "God thinks," "God desires," "God proposes," and so forth, we look at them incredulously, as we do at travelers who tell us of a far-away country of which we have never heard. We often suspect that their thought is colored by the atmosphere of an age when religion was closely assimilated to science, indeed constituted the whole of science.

This suggests a question which I have not touched upon thus far, although it occupies a large place in the controversies of educational circles and bears directly

on the subject of this chapter. It is maintained in these quarters that the Church is characterized by "obscurantism," "unenlightenment," and that its proper symbol is an extinguisher. Leaving out of our consideration the fact that other religions beside Christianity have sought to give a physical explanation of the universe and have given what we consider a false explanation, I may say that we are prone to forget that up until the Revolution all instruction was given by priests, and that even to-day the Church schools are causing anxiety to the secular schools under lay control by the success of their pupils in the examinations. But, it is argued, the Church gives a teaching that is false and opposes the progress of science. They keep harping on the old story of Galileo (very much open to question), forgetting that the Church at least did not guillotine Lavoisier or André Chénier, or do its best to destroy the past history of France, its monuments and archives. Physics is independent of metaphysics. But when it comes to questions of physics, of chemistry, geology or astronomy the teaching of the Catholic Institute is identical with that of the Sorbonne. There is no difference between them except in the religious conclusions drawn from these studies.

As to the *Index* of which so much has been said by the enemies of the Church, it merely calls attention to the books whose orthodoxy is open to suspicion and warns Christians to be on their guard against them, especially when the theme relates to Christianity and when what is written may, through the prestige of the author's talent, lure away from the faith a mind

that has not been forewarned. It might be decided, for example, that an effort such as the one attempted in this book might appear, in spite of its good intentions, more dangerous than useful. If this book were condemned by the authorities, I should not regard it as an effort to stifle the truth, but conclude simply that they had considered my method of presenting this truth unfortunate.

Every man to his taste! Those who prefer to shut themselves up all their lives in the confined atmosphere of a laboratory, or to limit the universe to the field of observation covered by a telescope, may do so! We for our part, after having toiled a long time, find it necessary to leave our microscopes and our scales in order to look at that which these instruments do not show us, and yet which we perceive and understand somewhat through other means. The infinite is not limited to a few stars, or the world of reality to certain atoms!

No, indeed, we do not choose to take science for our religion! We should too soon become atheists. Even in the physical domain our science is too imperfect, too discouraging, for those who do not regard all its conclusions as final like a catechism. Science is the most delightful of mistresses, whom one loves for her caprices and her changing humors, to whom one becomes attached perhaps all the more because one knows her to be uncertain, ever-changing, frail and always new. She is the sphinx, the fascinating sphinx, whose eyes we stare at distractedly. At the moment when we are inclined to doubt her, she appears more captivating than ever. But she does not supply

a solid and unshakable foundation for morality and the family; she is not the legitimate spouse to whom a man surrenders once for all his whole heart, with whom he becomes one, with whom he shares the deepest thoughts of his soul for life and for eternity.

PART II

THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER IV

PRAYER: CHURCHES: THE MASS AND THE SACRAMENTS: RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS: THE CULTUS OF THE SAINTS

Thus far we have examined only the chief principle of Christianity, namely, the act of faith which it requires in the divinity of Christ. We have concluded that even from a rational standpoint the arguments in favor of Christianity outweigh the objections based on the alleged impossibility of a divine incarnation and of miracles. A religion, however, is more than an act of faith. This faith carries with it obligations of conscience which involve worship and an attempt to live up to definite moral standards; it entails duties; it presupposes a divine assistance gained through prayer and the observance of certain sacred rites; it implies both advantages and inconveniences, individual and social. Before taking up Christian morality, which is the least difficult part of our subject, we shall first examine the practices of religion, on which there is a more acute difference of opinion. In accordance with the principles of fairness and impartiality which ought to control a work of this character, we must try not to ignore any of the primary objections urged against Catholicism; later on we shall see what is to be said in this respect on behalf of Protestantism.

It must indeed be recognized that many men who are disposed to admire and love the Christian phi-

losophy and morality recoil before Catholic practices as Rome has organized them. They love Christ. They are ready to believe in him; but they would be ill at ease in attending Mass, making their confessions or receiving communion. We can understand their hesitancy. Let us see, however, whether it is not possible to alleviate their difficulties by inquiring in this chapter what is the exact meaning of these Catholic practices. In the following chapter, we shall enter more fully into the controversial aspects of the discussion by considering, on the one hand, the attempts to construct a Christianity without external practices of devotion which Protestantism offers us; and on the other hand, those extreme forms of religious devotion which are generally attacked under the names of clericalism and superstition.

First of all, let me make a general observation. Although in the first chapters I have been necessarily drawn into matters of controversy, I am not writing here as a special pleader. I am defending Christianity against all attacks, but my particular aim is to make it better understood by those who live outside its influence. The part of the argument which cannot be avoided has for its aim the reassurance of those to whom our religion has long been presented as an absurdity, incompatible with every scientific notion, in order that they may appreciate in all its beauty and life-giving power this teaching which has been so greatly maligned. I shall speak, for example, of the sacraments, but I shall leave entirely on one side the question as to whether these sacraments possess the precise and direct virtues which the Catholic Church ascribes to them; whether their liturgical setting is of

divine institution; whether absolution remits sins; whether Christ is present in the consecrated Host; and whether the Holy Spirit enters the soul through confirmation. Having been compelled to treat the divinity of Christ within the compass of twenty pages, I may not insist at too great length on the exact meaning of the words which have always been considered essential in the administration of the sacraments. We do not possess a key to the meaning of the brief terms employed. It is sufficient here that their general sense be made clear: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." . . . "Go and sin no more!" . . . "This is my body, this is my blood." . . . "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." . . . Metaphysical discussions of this sort, the importance of which may be great for Catholics or Protestants, would have much less interest for a reader who, in taking up this book, was not even sure that he had a soul and perhaps is still doubtful of it. In theology, as in science, one may be criticized for constructing an imposing edifice on a foundation which lacks the cement supplied by faith. I am not so bold as to attempt, in spite of my personal preferences, to lead this sceptical reader to Catholicism rather than to Protestantism. I shall be well content if I can persuade him to adopt, or even to appreciate and admit, the Christian attitude of mind. The preponderant place which I shall attribute to Catholicism is not due simply to the fact that I consider it superior, but also to the fact that the objections of unbelievers are particularly strong when directed against Catholicism, and it is better to examine them where they are the most seductive.

In every religious cult, whatever it may be, one practice dominates and embraces all the others, namely, prayer: that act of adoration, petition, thanksgiving, love and hope whereby the creature unites himself with his Creator. It includes certain other acts, more or less numerous, complicated or formal, such as the presence at and participation in ceremonies, the observance of abstinence, the performance of vows. In these respects the Christian religion differs from other religions rather in its spirit than in its form. Before going into these practices in detail, let us first consider in a general way the practical value of religious worship.

First of all, we are taught, worship is a natural homage of submission and acknowledgment rendered to Almighty God considered as a Father. But I see a greater advantage in worship in that it recalls to our distracted minds the thought of the divine Being, unites man to him in spirit, incorporates a divine element into the actions of our daily life and consequently brings prominently before us the idea, so essential for every believer, and fundamental to all spiritual faith, that the universe is not limited to what is perceptible to our senses, but that there exists over and above what we can apprehend something that is invisible, intangible, incomprehensible and mysterious.

Man gladly forgets his feebleness, his lowliness and the shortness of his life. The needs, pleasures and trials of his everyday experience absorb all his attention. He might easily come to believe himself almighty and eternal if the practice of religion did not recall him periodically to more serious ideas. A bishop once remarked with a smile with reference to some political

offender: "This poor man must never have said his prayers." It is good for the soul to pray, as we easily perceive in conversation with superior men who never think of saying their prayers and are occupied only with political, financial or commercial affairs. Their mind remains shut up in the contingent, in the concrete, indifferent to the general ideas which are the saving salt of all true spiritual life.

Unbelievers and even some idle believers raise the objection, "Of what good is it to pray to God? Since he is God he knows in advance what we are going to say; and his decisions, determined upon from all eternity, could not in any way be affected by our prayers." There is indeed a pathetic contradiction in our petitioning God in time, when God is a stranger to all time; or in space, when God fills all space. It is the general contradiction between the divine foreknowledge and human free will which may be opposed to each other on a particular matter. For the fatalist, as for the determinist, prayer cannot logically be anything but a homage to divinity; it can never be merely supplication. Nevertheless, the Christian invokes God, and in response God, for whom time does not exist, takes into consideration from all eternity this prayer. He does not foresee it, he rather wills it outside of time. He assists in this free act of ours as in everything which constitutes our free will, and from all eternity he approves of it.

Christian prayer is indeed, like ancient and pagan prayer, supplication; it is also like that of the Mussulman an act of submission and prostration before the divine will; but it is still more—and this element is peculiar to Christianity—an act of love. The Chris-

tian is not content to worship God in fear and trembling or to supplicate him in hope; he *loves* God and feels himself loved in return. Here is an entirely new sentiment which has put a different aspect upon the constantly present problem of evil, as well as upon the problem of suffering and death. The Christian knows or rather believes that his God is good, indeed that he is all goodness and all love; he likens him to a father who sometimes disciplines or chastises his children, but always for their good. This is what unbelievers cannot understand, or rather it appears to them a subject for mockery. One may, it is true, lay himself open to ridicule when he invokes on all occasions the "designs of Providence," and when he claims to be able to interpret them in a human way, as if he had a direct and personal access to the counsels of God. It is nevertheless a source of joy and consolation in time of trial that we may have a conviction of the goodness of God—as a necessary complement to his infinite perfection. The wicked God whom the fetishists or the pagans fear has disappeared from the universe; and yet without transforming the universe into a great fatalistic machine whose wheels inexorably crush all who come in contact with it. In the eyes of the Christian the world follows a plan, tends toward an end, takes on a meaning; the world is not only matter, but also spirit and will; and this will, because it is divine, remains forever free without ever degenerating into mere caprice. Strengthened by this conviction the sufferer gains confidence through his suffering, instead of remaining prostrate under a wicked or indifferent force. The suffering appears to him to be salutary.

The Christian also believes that God wishes men to

pray to him. It is not that he compels us to pray by virtue of his omnipotence, but that he wishes us to pray because it is a choice of our own free will. What a consolation to be able to appeal to God knowing that he hears our petitions and does not consider them vain, and thus to be assured that we are acting efficaciously instead of submitting inertly to fate!

I am fully conscious of the apparent contradiction in the terms which I have purposely placed in juxtaposition. But here, as in the case of many other metaphysical problems, we are confronted with two kinds of facts the logical bond or connection of which escapes us; we hold two ends of a chain without seeing or touching the part in between. Because we do not see this middle part of the chain is no reason for denying that it exists. It must necessarily exist.

How are we to pray to God? All religions have adopted certain forms of prayer which have the defect of making prayer too easy and mechanical. But this mechanical appearance is lost when we recite with attention the fundamental prayer taught by Jesus Christ himself to his disciples in response to their request that he teach them how to pray. Is it, humanly speaking, possible to imagine a lifting up of the heart and soul toward God in a form of prayer more beautiful, more profound, more complete in its brevity than the Lord's Prayer? It includes everything: trustful adoration, submission to the divine will, solidarity, love, forgiveness of offenses, petitions for moral progress. The man who prostrates himself before the divine majesty and implores the help of the Almighty asks of him especially the grace to become more like him by growing better: "Our Father, who art in

heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil."

Where ought we to pray to God? Assuredly everywhere. However, all religions have adopted or constructed places specially consecrated for worship, which they call temples or churches. This is because of a combination of practical and moral advantages that are easily understood.

In the first place it is natural that certain prayers of a more solemn nature be made by men in common. When united they render mutual service to each other by support and example; they manifest on an important occasion that solidarity which is fundamental for social life, and as a practical consequence they are able in this way better to receive the teachings of their pastors. Moreover, in order to concentrate the mind of man in the midst of his diverse occupations, it has always been considered helpful to set apart for prayer certain predetermined days: some of these recur at short intervals, such as every week; others occur only once a year. Therefore, if all are to pray on the same day, it is logical that they pray together. Christ invited his disciples to assemble in memory of him, saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

But even for private prayer the church is more suitable, I need hardly say, than the barn, the studio, the factory or the drawing room. Our attention is naturally distracted by our surroundings. In order to

insulate ourselves from the material world and to exalt ourselves to such considerations as are superior to the petty cares of our daily life, unless we are to make a superhuman attempt at concentration, it is necessary that we should be able to recollect ourselves silently in a place where all the surroundings suggest thoughts of the divine, and where nothing drags the mind back to external things.

Such is the function and value of the church. And this explains the meaning of the ornaments which are characteristic of the Catholic Church. Protestantism has abandoned all this external expression of religion and reproves it. If religion were practiced only by pure spirits, Protestantism would be in the right. We should then have no need of a crucifix to concentrate our thoughts on the redemption, or of a church with its mysterious arches or of the solemn tones of the organ, or of the luminous splendor of the ceremonies, to lift up our hearts toward God. It is indeed (and I will come back to this point later on) allowing the senses to have a share in that which should be pure feeling. But how many are capable of this abstract emotion? How many can transport themselves suddenly from the material world into the supernatural? The composer who is preparing to work out a musical theme of his own often begins by playing over the familiar and well-loved airs of a great composer of former times in order to create the proper atmosphere for himself. The painter will meditate long before the canvases of the old masters in an art gallery. In both cases the desire is not to imitate, but to seek inspiration. . . .

Owing to the fact that the church is the common

house of prayer for all people and has been so throughout the ages, it has taken on in human estimation certain associations which endear it to all who are devoted to the past. This characteristic it shares no doubt with other equally ancient buildings; and anyone who loves the past is impressed by the sight of even the most insignificant panel of a wall to which cling the memories of bygone days. In particular, the old public buildings such as the town halls and the bell towers of European cities arouse in their inhabitants similar memories. Here, however, it is only a question of material interests, of hard-won rights and liberties, of disputes over laws or taxes, sometimes of the defense of the nation against invasion. The church, on the other hand, has been associated with every phase in the life of our forefathers, with everything that has counted most, entirely apart from the futile daily struggle for existence. Each of the great events of human experience—birth, marriage, death—has been recorded there. In their deepest sorrows, anxieties or hopes men have resorted to the church. It is there that they have found inspiration for holier, more conscientious and courageous living. Even for the unbeliever the walls of the church suggest such memories and thoughts; how much more for him who considers the spiritual and religious life alone as possessing enduring value and interest.

That is why we love all the old churches, and perhaps most of all the smallest and most humble; and that is why we suffer as though our heart strings had been torn when we see them abandoned to the ravages of time, when we see these venerable edifices pillaged under the pretext of reconstruction by the faithless

and the sacrilegious. The archeological value which has been pleaded as a motive for saving some of these churches should not be heeded. A church ought not to be a museum. Its whole historical beauty lies in its memories, in the fact that it presents a center upon which may be focused all our thoughts of oneness with our descendants as well as with our ancestors.

But a new church may also become dear to us if it has been built with love and devotion. . . .

In addition to private and common prayer Catholic worship includes certain ceremonies and ritual practices which form an integral part of it, and which even assume in the minds of too many among the devout an all-important place, attendance at the appointed offices or the precise performance of certain acts of devotion becoming in their estimation the supreme element in religion.

The first of these practices is assisting at Mass, which the Catholic Church makes obligatory on Sundays and the Holy Days of obligation.

What is the Mass? It is the mystical representation of the atoning death of our Redeemer which above all else characterizes Christianity. The Sacrifice of the Mass commemorates and reproduces the Sacrifice of the Cross. We see here one of the numerous examples of the complete transformation which ancient pagan rites have undergone by being incorporated into Christianity: a transformation which has rendered the old elements spiritual without taking away from their reality. In most religions the custom has prevailed of offering to the god whom one worships gifts or bloody sacrifices, as one might pay a tax or customs duty to a sovereign. Originally these sacrifices often

consisted of human victims, even among peoples so civilized as the Greeks or Hebrews. In Christianity not only have both animal and human sacrifices been abandoned, but sacrifice has lost its bloody character, and in addition there has been a most extraordinary reversal: instead of man being sacrificed to God, it is here God who sacrifices himself for the salvation of man.

Obviously it is not necessary to assist at Mass as if we were at a conference in the Sorbonne, wholly pre-occupied with the task of reasoning and comprehending. If we surrender ourselves to the divine action in the Eucharist, this practice becomes a source of consolation and virtue. This is even more true when the union thus begun is brought to a perfect completion through the act of sacramental communion. At the moment of consecration, which forms the climax of the Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus Christ at the word of the priest incarnates himself in the sacred Host; and consequently he who eats this morsel of bread becomes ineffably a partaker of the divine nature.

The idea of communion has been quite differently understood by the various Christian sects. For the Catholic Church God is really and substantially present in the Host. But the beauty and grandeur of Holy Communion do not depend only on the fact that a mysterious incarnation has taken place in consequence of the ritual actions and words. Whoever believes in God considers God as really present everywhere. For him it is sufficient to recall the words of Christ at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me," in order to arouse in him a profound emotion and the highest aspiration toward holiness. But those who approach

the sacrament with a lively faith are filled with joy at the idea of thus possessing and being possessed by the fulness of him who filleth all in all, the God of love. The Word made Flesh becomes for him a source of strength and enables him to rise above the common-places of everyday life. Those who sneer at the idea of swallowing "these little round wafers" have never read a chapter of the *Imitation* and have little notion of the intensity of the happiness which surpasses all the fleeting satisfactions of body and mind; they have no conception of what the memory of their first communion means even to many men who have since become unbelievers.

A similar conception is reflected in the other sacraments, whereby the leading events of life are ennobled, dignified and illuminated by being linked to an act which is performed in obedience to a divine command. Man is born, united in marriage to a woman, lives again in his children and disappears. That is all that we see of him. But in that he is not distinguished externally from any other animal. Birth, reproduction and death are the consummation of natural functions, such as digestion, respiration or the circulation of the blood. But we have now reached the point in our argument where we can admit that all which tends to distinguish man from the animal and to elevate him to a higher stage of evolution helps him to understand and love life all the more, and that without it he would be miserable in his complete futility. The moments of birth and death thus take on a mystical value and are illuminated by a supernatural significance when we see them not only as a new grouping of cells which are formed only to dissolve, but as the thresholds on

which appears and disappears a spiritual principle capable of seeking for the truth, loving righteousness and appreciating beauty.

All religions, moreover, have understood this, and we may say that it is, along with the worship of God, the paramount object of all cults to sanctify these three supreme moments in which the life of man takes on a symbolical meaning and value at which our reason is astounded. In most religions the act which assumes the greatest significance is the act whereby man becomes a sort of creator, and seems for the moment to be associated with the divine omnipotence and to be given the power of perpetuating himself. In connection with this act religions were wont to direct their worship toward the Cyprian Aphrodite, the generative principle. Then, when it came to death, it was the worship of the dear departed shades, their continuation of a life analogous to ours, rather than any consolation ministered to the souls of the dying, which occupied the attention. Christianity, here as everywhere, transfers its attention from the material to the spiritual life. In connection with birth, for instance, it is concerned not so much with this body which is beginning to give evidence of life and feeling, as with the soul which is beginning to express itself through the body: the soul too closely knit up with the body through hereditary instinct and still in the state of original sin. The purpose of the sacrament of baptism is to give strength to combat these instincts and to remedy the defects of original sin, by applying to the soul the grace that emanates from the Redeemer. Here the important fact is no longer the birth of the man, but the birth of the Christian.

Likewise in marriage what the Christian sees is the association of two beings who are united for eternity: two bodies which coöperate for the purpose of reproduction in accordance with the divine promise, but also two souls who unite their forces, their hopes and their desires.

Finally after death the Church reverently buries and treats with the utmost respect the body which had contained the soul as a vase still holds the lingering odor of incense. Before death it was the soul attached to a body in which the Church was primarily interested, with a view to strengthening, purifying and spiritualizing it by extreme unction.

However, the Christian does not attach, as did the Jews, the idea of impurity or defilement to the functions and incidental acts connected with birth and death, which are important because they contribute to the incarnation or the setting free of a soul. He does not make haste to purify the mother of a new-born child or the house of the departed. At the most, he retains the ceremonies of the ancient law to attribute to them a new meaning. He gives little heed to these material aspects which impress our senses, but are not really the important feature of these two moments of entering life and departing from it.

What liturgical setting should we require for the sacraments which consecrate human life and satisfy spiritual needs? We find there is a great difference of opinion between Catholics and Protestants in this matter, just as in other matters. The Catholic seems, we must admit, to attach a sort of magical virtue to the words, formulas and ritual acts by which these sacraments are conferred. There are in the sacraments

certain sacred outward signs which are regarded as possessing in themselves the miraculous power of calling down the divine grace upon the human being, on condition that the recipients possess the requisite disposition of soul. This virtue is attached to certain symbolical actions performed by the priest or the bishop in accordance with the prescriptions of the Congregation of Rites, and under the conditions imposed by the hierarchy. This implies a formalism which has shocked Protestants and called forth many objections from unbelievers. A sacrament, the Catholic Church tells us, has a sanctifying effect in itself, as have also the "sacramentals," such as holy water, ashes, and so forth. It is on this principle that baptism may be administered to a new-born babe, although this infant is incapable of understanding its significance; and later on he is asked to renew the vows made in his name by his sponsors. In accordance with the same principle, Pope Pius X recently advocated and imposed very early and frequent communion as a means of increasing sanctifying grace as abundantly as possible.

As bearing on this point, many decisions have been canonically enacted to establish the fact that the virtue of a sacrament is independent of the character of the priest who administers it, provided that he has received the proper credentials in his ordination to the priesthood. A priest may have become a criminal, a heretic, or have been excommunicated from the bosom of the faithful and yet the marriage which he shall have solemnized, the absolution which he shall have pronounced are none the less valid on that account, just as a remedy retains its efficacy whatever may be

the moral character of the physician who prescribes it. It is not a question of the personal character of the priest; it is God who acts through him, for he has chosen him as his representative by conferring on him the sacrament of Orders, and this mandate is irrevocable: "Thou art a priest forever."

I am not here insisting on these ideas, which are perhaps the element in Catholic practice which an unbeliever has the greatest difficulty in accepting. I shall later take up the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism regarding the nature of the ministry. For here I am concerned with the unbeliever. He sees in Christian Rome a little of the ancient Rome, where religion had primarily a social value, and the scrupulous performance of priestly functions in accordance with prescribed rites had a political bearing. The objection, however, is unimportant. For there are many people who, when once they have admitted the advantage of religious discipline, strict regulation and obedience to ecclesiastical authority, feel themselves attracted by a logical necessity to ceremonial observance. Any man who mistrusts himself has no difficulty in submitting to practices whose spiritual symbolism cannot fail to impress him. The State equally understands the necessity of regulating and celebrating the leading events of life by giving a special solemnity to the installation into office of a magistrate, which corresponds to the sacrament of Orders or to the restoration of the rights of citizenship, which is civil absolution. We are already familiar with "secular baptisms." We seek to embellish the solemnization of civil marriage and burial at least by the accompaniment of flowers, music and discourses.

No one will deny that, in associating the thought of God with the three days which mark the beginning, the culmination and the ending of our earthly life, we eloquently emphasize the fundamental connection between the material world and human beings, and thereby demonstrate the profound value of these acts from the point of view of God's eternal plan for society, independently of the poor mortal who seems alone to occupy the center of the stage on these occasions.

These considerations must appear natural and simple to everyone, for the sanctification of birth, marriage and death has never aroused any opposition on principle, except among those who would like to suppress all forms. The controversies to which I have just alluded bear rather on the sacrament of penance and the abuses which are supposed to flow from it.

The Catholic principle is that for sins committed reparation may be made and forgiveness obtained through repentance, good works, the firm purpose not to fall again into the same sins and the confession to a priest who has the power to grant absolution. The idea that no fault, no matter how grave it may be, should be considered irreparable, if one perseveres in repentance, would I suppose satisfy all philosophers. It is beautiful and consoling, it forms the necessary counterpart of the Christian principle that all the acts of our life are recorded for eternity and must be submitted to the formidable judgment which takes place after death. None of our voluntary and conscious acts can be unimportant. They all result in an aggravation or attenuation of pain according as they abase or exalt us. This conviction must compel us to watch

scrupulously over our actions, to recall them to our memory by a daily self-examination, to pass judgment on them and attempt to rectify them. That is undeniably a principle of perfection.

But this principle of perfection would be destroyed and the guilty man would be reduced to the most barren despair if he had no longer any means of justifying himself and appeasing an implacable God. That has been the result of the terrible doctrine of predestination. The teaching of Christ is quite different and such as we might expect from him whom we rightly call the Good God or the God of Love. We have only to recall the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, that of the Prodigal Son, his indulgence toward Samaritans, publicans or adulterous women, the story of the penitent thief, in order to understand that Christ has always wished to supply to the most criminal of men, up to their last hour, the means of redeeming themselves. There are many allusions in the Gospels to this redemption and its sanction by priestly absolution: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. . . . Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them."

For anyone who has truly the realization of and remorse for a sin, it is agony to feel that it is irreparable, that it never can be blotted out from the Book of Life, whatever may be one's future conduct. Modern legislators have understood this more and more and in every way possible have sought to draw the criminal back from the abyss into which in former times he was plunged. No longer is the mark of dishonor imprinted by a red-hot iron on his shoulder; there is no more perpetual punishment; no more proclamations, like

the convict's red hat, publishing a record of the condemned man's past. On the contrary, we now have alleviations of punishment going so far as complete pardon following good conduct; we have laws suspending the sentence on a first offense until a second has been committed. The Christian Church adopted the same view a long time ago when it instituted the sacrament of penance, which is one of the distinctive marks of Catholicism.

In Catholic practice the necessity of confessing one's faults is precisely what is needed to counterbalance the ease with which forgiveness is obtained. It is also valuable for the development of humility. Sacramental confession compels us to be precise in our self-examinations and also checks the harmful indulgence which we might be tempted to allow ourselves. In the early ages of the Church confession was made before the whole congregation; it is now made to a priest who, in this capacity especially, loses his own personality and becomes rather the representative of God. However, it is not the fact that he represents God that people object to as being harmful or erroneous in this Catholic sacrament. The objections that are made may be summed up under two heads: on the one hand, it has seemed to those who regard the external practice rather than the spirit of the Church that an absolution so easy to obtain may lead people to commit sins more frequently rather than reform their sinful tendencies; on the other hand, Catholicism has been reproached for the spiritual harm from the direction which is exercised over the penitent by a man who perhaps in some cases has not been able sufficiently to forget that he was a man. They have at the

same time criticized the commercial aspect of the sacrament of penance: offerings imposed by the confessor, payment for indulgences, and so forth. Let us examine these two objections in order.

First, then, if there is a point that is fundamental in the Catholic doctrine of penance, it is that absolution is not efficacious without the firm purpose of amendment and the promise to make as far as possible appropriate satisfaction for the results of the sin. Because of the fear of sacrilege, a Catholic who knows his religion would never reason in the way attributed to him by unbelievers: "I may sin without hesitation, since the remedy is always at hand." It is likewise a principle of orthodoxy that absolution must be supplemented by perfect contrition and without it has no effect. It is therefore not true that in this particular case formalism dominates, or that it is sufficient for a man who has robbed or assassinated to perform certain easy acts in order to become white as snow. There may have been Spanish or Italian bandits who imagined this; but they fell into an error for which Catholic doctrine was not responsible. We recall Bossuet's condemnation of such people: "Those who make a doubtful repentance the motive of a certain crime," who "sin with the intention of repenting," who "pollute by their sacrileges the waters of penitence."

As to the commercial side of confession, or the "trafficking in indulgences," the abuses which have taken place in and are inseparable from every human practice are here reduced to a minimum, if they have not entirely disappeared, so that we may no longer judge the whole body of the clergy by certain un-

scrupulous priests, any more than we may judge the whole judicial system by a few prevaricating judges. In this day of unbelief and irreligion, if a priest felt himself tempted to err, he would be held back by the constant ill will which spies on him even in his most innocent acts. Furthermore, it should be realized that women often have an instinctive need of being supported and directed; and they do not always find among their immediate associates who ought to be their guides and their natural support, such as a father or husband, the moral direction which they desiderate. When this natural direction exists, it is only rarely that a priest would venture to put himself in conflict with it. That would hardly be the case except when the father or the husband sought to turn a woman away from her religion. Then only the director would urge a woman to resist him; and yet even in this situation many attenuations are permitted and even ordered for the sake of avoiding a greater evil.

In this connection I ought perhaps to say a word about certain violent onslaughts which have been made on the books intended for the exclusive use of confessors, which have been branded as immoral. It is very much as if we should condemn a code of law for being immoral because it provides for and enumerates all crimes. The judge must be acquainted with the sources of human wickedness in order that he may understand the better the cases which shall be submitted to him. But the grave and delicate cases which have been singled out as being scandalous are generally the cases "reserved" for special and experienced confessors, and have nothing to do with the ordinary practice of confession.

I might limit myself to the important points which have just been examined. For before my reader, such as I conceive him to be, becomes a devotee and enters upon the full practice of the Catholic religion, he must first go through many degrees of initiation in which he will be conducted by guides more authoritative than I. If therefore I take up certain other phases of religious practice, it is for the purpose of anticipating the objections which may be raised by those who do not really understand them. The two points which I wish to deal with particularly as having incurred the reproach of being pagan are the festivals and cultus of the saints.

When Christianity became established it implied a passionate revolt against paganism; but finding people accustomed to pagan rites it sometimes preserved the external side of these rites while it changed their inner meaning. This did not come about by preconceived calculation; but it was unavoidable that the poor and the peasants (*pagani*, *païens*) on becoming Christian should retain certain minor practices and superstitions and attach a virtue of their own to certain ancient usages; and the priests, in order not to clash with them on every point, tolerated what seemed to them harmless. It is always easier to transform laws than customs.

This indeed rarely happened; and when we recall this phase of the conflict we are more generally struck by the spirit of reaction which manifested itself on every hand. The Christian breaks idols; he easily becomes an iconoclast, even when it comes to the symbolic images in his own places of worship. He drives out with exorcisms all the little gods that dwelt in the

pagan household, animated the forests and the springs, and which were conceived as demons when they were not looked upon as good spirits or fairies. In regard to the custom which has always assumed so great an importance in the popular mind and has drawn a sharp line of cleavage between races, namely, the funeral rite, the Christian was violently in conflict with the Greeks and the Romans through the substitution of burial for cremation and through attaching an importance which astounds us to the dogma of the resurrection of the body. Indeed this dogma was probably the reason for burial rather than cremation. Even in giving names to individuals the Christian spirit was evident in the refusal to consider anything but the baptismal name.

Nevertheless, there are analogies which strike us more forcibly than these contrasts, now that paganism properly so-called has so long been a thing of the past. There are, for example, the two great feasts of the year—the mournful feast of autumn and the joyful feast of spring—whereon pagans celebrated the death and resurrection of Adonis, at almost the same dates on which Christians keep the feast of the dead and of Easter. There is also the blessing of the fire, that fire whose cult goes back to the most ancient of the Sanskrit peoples and which still burns perpetually before our tabernacles and the sacred ikons of the Slavs; there is the lustral water that has become holy water; there are the vestal virgins who have bequeathed something of their character upon the consecrated virgins of the Church, and so forth. But so long as we can see this analogy in the outward form it is

needless to determine at what time the inner meaning became different.

I would say as much for the few customs which are associated, on the other hand, with Judaism. The relations between Christianity and Judaism have often altered with the passing years, as they have been accentuated by the predominance of one or the other of the two contrary tendencies which have existed from the beginning. In many ways Christianity was a reaction from Judaism, and at a very early period the Alexandrian spirit began to color its theology. Nevertheless, in the minds of impartial observers the two religions have long seemed to be practically the same. For many centuries the Romans were hardly able to distinguish the Jews from the Christians, and both religions carried on intimate relations with each other which astound us when we find traces of them in the old narratives. The teaching of Christ, which was so definitely opposed on certain points to that of Jerusalem, and so constantly and resolutely hostile to the scribes and the Pharisees, nevertheless showed great respect for the synagogue and the temple. Orthodoxy still regards the New Law as proceeding from the Old. However, since Christianity has triumphed, the disagreements between the two have become accentuated, beginning especially with the Middle Ages. A compelling instinct, although not at all orthodox, warned the Christian that his religion was opposed to Judaism, although it had its roots in the latter. The general hatred felt for the Jews is the popular witness to this fact. If it were only a question of punishing the Jews for the death of Christ, then in justice we should have to thank them and congratulate them for having pro-

duced the Apostles and the first disciples. However, it very rarely occurs to the mind of the modern Christian that Christ and his disciples and all those who preached the Gospel were really Jews. Although we celebrate every year the Feast of the Circumcision, and although the subject is frequently represented in the old paintings in our churches, we Christians practically never think of Christ as a circumcised Jew.

What traces are there of Jewish practices in Christian rites? All the complicated observances of purification and the requirement to abstain from contact with unclean objects have entirely disappeared from Christian ceremonies, owing to the change of climate—for they were largely due to the climate—and Mohammedanism, an Oriental religion, has retained them to a much greater extent than Christianity. The same thing is true of the absence of images. The statues and pictures in our churches are only symbols, as everyone knows, but they exist; and the Hebrew temple prohibited them, as did the mosque. Baptism only vaguely recalls circumcision. The Sunday rest of Catholics no longer resembles the ancient strict Sabbath of the Pharisees, against which Christ never ceased to protest, even to the point of giving offense. It is not the Church, it is the civil law, which to-day forbids the Good Samaritan from dressing wounds on a Sunday. The Easter which we celebrate has no longer any connection with the Jewish Passover, and no Catholic in our day thinks of sacrificing a lamb. As to the other Jewish festivals, such as the Feast of the Tabernacles and so forth, they have entirely disappeared, and the Christian no longer expresses his gratitude to the eternal God for having in ancient

times delivered him from Egypt, in spite of our use of the Psalm, "When Israel came out of Egypt." Judaism supplies us with the Psalms which we interpret symbolically; the Old Testament suggests types through which the spirit of the New is symbolized. And for Catholics that is almost all. . . .

The entire system of Catholic worship is replete with this symbolism, to a degree that is little suspected by those who have not made a careful study of the subject. Where worldly spectators perceive only a pompous and theatrical ceremony, the truth is that each word, ritual act and ceremonial detail have been selected, considered and combined for the purpose of setting forth a teaching or supplying a subject for devout meditation; just as in the bas-reliefs and stained-glass windows of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries no single feature is left merely to the whim of the artist, but all the postures and expressions of the figures have their mystical meaning. This meaning, when we once learn it or rediscover it and are not content to gaze indifferently as though we were spectators of a little understood pantomime, helps to keep the mind, so liable to distraction, within the circle of religious thoughts which are in harmony with the sacred event celebrated by the Church in the office for the day. This does not apply to the old barbarous Latin whose idioms and peculiarities, accompanied by the modulations of the plainsong, hardly add savor to this spiritual food, and do not transport us to the ancient times, when the love of God really and completely filled the hearts of the best of men.

I come finally to the cultus of the saints, which is

still peculiar to Catholicism and sedulously avoided by Protestants.

The legends of the saints played an important role in the Christianity of the Middle Ages. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the indulgent Church permitted an overgrowth of beautiful pious tales. These tales were edifying, but at the same time diverting to the faithful. It was the time when the glass workers and sculptors so often pictured in our cathedrals the story of St. Nicholas, of St. Eustace the hunter, of St. Giles with his roe, or of the good giant St. Christopher. Soon, however, the authorities of the Church began rather to tolerate than to accept all these apocryphal miracles, which the later historical criticism of the theologians has dealt with more and more severely; this criticism has become almost implacable since the Council of Trent. It would be difficult to imagine that the Golden Legend could be orthodox; the Bollandists had already called it the legend of lead; and it is certainly much more frequently read to-day by the erudite or litterateurs in search of poetical narratives than by faithful Catholics. There have been people in the Church as zealous in discrediting saints; and to create new saints a process of beatification and canonization is conducted in the Roman Curia with a rigor, a scepticism, long delays and endless stages which would scarcely be equaled by civil tribunals. I am not then obliged to justify the popular form of the cultus of the saints, which has sometimes presented an appearance that is pagan or even idolatrous. Although I do feel, I confess, an indulgent sympathy for all such superstitions as have their root in a distant past.

The common people tend to materialize and paganize whatever they touch; but in the cultus of the saints the primary idea is spiritual and it is that which we must consider. The saints, who were men like us although superior to us through their virtues, are venerated in their heavenly glory as examples for us to imitate and as intercessors. When we show a respect to their relics which has sometimes taken on the unfortunate appearance of fetishism, it is, to quote a saying of Pascal, by virtue of this principle that their bodies, "although dead in the eyes of men, are more than ever alive in the sight of God, because sin no longer dwells in them."

Christianity is the religion of example. In addition to the unique and divine example of Christ, which the *Imitation* brings constantly before our thoughts, the saints supply us with ideals which are more within the reach of our feeble attempts, ideals suited to all the circumstances and vocations of life. Paganism never knew anything like it. Its great gods did not mingle with humanity except to partake of their vices; its little gods were, like the nymphs and elves and goblins of German legend, capricious and fantastic beings, sometimes beneficent and friendly, but often also perverse and malicious. Its demigods took the form of slayers of monsters and public benefactors; its heroes were only official personages raised to the status of divinity. But it did not occur to the mind of a pagan that any of them might present an example of virtue, any more than Caesar thought of making the people more moral. Here we meet with a new conception, at least in the West; and humanity finds inspiration and support in meditating on these lives

which were human lives sanctified by piety, charity, resignation, devotion, purity and martyrdom. The gallery of the saints which the sculptors have carved on the façades of our cathedrals furnishes magnificent illustrations of these qualities. One might say that the new-born religion was developed by the virtue of charity and by martyrdom. Through these two modes of activity the old saints and martyrs who died fifteen or twenty centuries ago are still working powerfully for the progress of humanity.

But the saints are not only models for us to follow; they are also regarded by the Catholic as intercessors, and in that way devotion to them renders religion more appealing to the humble and simple-minded. For them the great God of Christianity is a God so powerful, so far removed from men, wrapped in a mystery so vague, that taken by himself he seems like one of those formidable Oriental sovereigns whose form is barely discernible except through the trembling of the veil.

We, on the contrary, know that the saints were, during their lives, men like us. Their sanctity preserves for us the notion of human fellowship and helpfulness. We supplicate them with the greater boldness to pray to God for us. Those who consider themselves strong say, "This is fiction for the weak." But how many of the weak are happy to be able to depend on such support when they were not able to walk alone!

Among these heavenly intercessors there were men of all ranks, all professions and all temperaments. Each human being, in whatever situation he may be called upon to act, may find among them a model and

a patron. In former times baptismal names were not given by chance, or simply to follow a fad, or because they were euphonious. They were handed down through the first-born of each family, and pledged this family to a special devotion to the saint venerated by their ancestors. There was and still is in the preference given to a particular saint a sort of patriotic devotion, sometimes a local patriotism, and this patriotic feeling spread over the whole country. All France possessed in heaven faithful friends who were known as the "great patron saints of France." Although Christianity is essentially a universal and international religion, yet it finds a place for more restricted devotions to the nation or even to the family.

In our time, when the pictures of the old local saints in our country churches are being more and more neglected and when the Roman Church is striving for the world-wide unification of Catholicism as expressed in the last detail of rite and formulary, we have nevertheless seen the cultus of the saints assuming in France a deeply patriotic form, perhaps even militaristic, in the new devotion to St. Joan of Arc. As this thought may have occurred to more than one reader, it may not be superfluous to show how adaptable even this rigid Catholic doctrine may be when there is need.

The old Roman paganism was essentially a national religion. All religions up to the time of Christianity were likewise local religions whose gods armed themselves in defense of their favorite people. One of the most profound revolutions introduced by Christianity was the conception of a universal religion which was injected into a world torn by dissensions and wars—or at least insufficiently unified by Roman religion—

with its message of peace. This was its glory; but might also be its danger in practical application. Christianity is in its very essence international, anti-militarist and pacifist. The supreme law of Christ was: "Love one another"; his first maxim: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"; his constant teaching: "Blessed are the peacemakers" . . . or, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." It would indeed be difficult to find in the Gospels any defense or justification of war. The little nationalistic and warlike gods of the ancients seemed definitely eliminated. Christians ceased (and the pagan world well understood this) to train their fellow-citizens to breed men. The true Christian saint appeared in St. Francis of Assisi. . . . And yet it is impossible for any social group whatever, much less for a country, to continue its existence if it does not defend itself against unjust aggression. When barbarians commit crimes and pillage and burn churches, to limit oneself to turning the other cheek would be equivalent to suicide. However pacifist or Christian a nation may be, it must, in legitimate self-defense, resign itself to taking up arms. Such a necessity was violently demonstrated to us once more in recent years, and it was then that we saw rapidly introduced into our churches devotion to this new saint. The cult of the mysterious young maid who in a few months freed her native soil from its invaders has taken on the character of a national religion.

St. Joan of Arc gives us an example of holy warfare against the enemies of one's country, of a warfare which does not aim at conquest, pillage, incendiarism

or murder, but only deliverance and enfranchisement; the only kind of warfare which a Christian can conscientiously approve, but a warfare which he must be always ready to support, just as he defends himself at all times in his own spiritual life against the forces of evil.

To ask the saints to intercede for us with God may seem like an anthropomorphic conception. But for the more intelligent this cult which has been considered pagan is connected with the beautiful Christian notion of the subtle kinship that binds souls together, in spite of the apparent barriers of time and space.

All the souls who have sojourned on earth, those who are here fulfilling their time of probation and those who are not yet born, are bound together in the fellowship of love by the supreme virtue of Charity, which is "the love of God and of our neighbor for the sake of God and in God." The other virtues, we must repeat, are temporal; Charity alone abides unto life eternal, and the saints continue to be united by Charity with their successors on earth. Just as the Christian prays for the souls in Purgatory and applies to them his merits or sacrifices, so the saints may unite their triumphant hosannas with our humble prayers. In praying to them we do not invoke and adore them as we invoke and adore God, but we associate ourselves more intimately with them in thought; and in endeavoring to imitate them we approach nearer to God. To pray to the saints would be fruitless if we did not consider this prayer as a means of our sanctification, following in their footsteps.

CHAPTER V

CLERICALISM: CATHOLICISM AND PROTESTANTISM: MONASTICISM: SUPERSTITION

The examination of Catholic practice which we have made in the preceding chapter has already led us to touch incidentally on problems which we purpose to take up in this chapter; but it is more convenient for our understanding of them to group together the charges against Catholic practice which have been made with such bitterness, and which for the last century have compelled the transfer of this quarrel from the metaphysical to the political realm. They may all be summed up under the contemptuous term *clericalism*, which is regarded as an exploitation of superstition. It is alleged that priests are the initial cause rather than the consequence of Catholic practices. As Protestantism has tried to avert this reproach by eliminating as far as possible from religion all ritualism and sacerdotalism, this will afford us a good opportunity to make a comparison between these two opposite ways of looking at Christianity, both of which entirely apart from their dogmatic differences have their advantages and disadvantages, and appeal respectively to different kinds of minds.

Everyone knows what is meant by clericalism. It is the principle, borrowed from ancient religions, of a

sacerdotal caste, a class outside of and above humanity, which authoritatively imposes without possibility of contradiction various rules and dogmas, and which in consequence often has a tendency to claim the right to interfere overmuch in the conduct of government or the teaching of science. Even ignoring the abuses which may be avoided, there are undoubtedly many men who would not tolerate the thought of priests' regulating or directing in the least degree their manner of thinking—or so they imagine. They pretend in every matter to be guided only by the authority of their reason and they suppose, somewhat naïvely, that they succeed, whence their claim that they alone are philosophers and free thinkers.

The existence of a clerical caste and the role which it is proper to attribute to it are external features of religion regarding which we may argue without trenching upon the religious principle itself. The essence of Christianity is so little dependent upon the sacerdotal principle that we may easily find in reading the Gospels, even in the words of Jesus Christ himself, all the elements of a revolt against the ritual formalism of the priesthood. It is possible then to call oneself a Christian when one possesses faith in God, without attending church, or fasting, or Mosaic purification, or submission to priests. Without going so far as that, it is possible to imagine a Gallicanism separated from the Pope which would be analogous to the Anglican religion. But with restrictions of this sort one can hardly call himself a Catholic in the traditional sense. Catholicism, in short, implies as essential to its existence a strongly organized hierarchy, inseparably linked together. The highest office in it

is that held by the Pope. On a lower level the bishops, assembled in council, hold after him the power not of inventing or discovering, but of formulating correctly and precisely the dogmas which all Catholics are bound to accept.

This regular and symmetrical organization constitutes a vast and powerful classical armor, like that used by the Roman soldier, and it presents both the qualities and the defects of organization and military discipline; and there has been inherent in it from the start a tendency which has driven it further and further along the path of a uniform and rigid formalism to the proclamation in 1870 of Papal Infallibility. Catholicism has sometimes been reproached with exaggerating this tendency and with not being able to lend itself to an evolution to a more simple form of religion which, considering the beginnings of Christianity, would have retained the allegiance of many adherents. The proposal has been made to "modernize" it. But Catholicism is traditional in its very essence, and its doctrine is unchangeable. To rejuvenate it or bring it up to date would be to disarm it, to rob it of its homogeneity, stability and continuity, which are its *raison d'être*, and the chief source of its strength. A religion of authority can no more cut its roots in the past to be in the fashion than a science can insist on growing old clothed in antiquated formulae. Owing to a slow crystallization, which since its first days has always remained true to the same geometrical principles, Roman Catholicism has become what it is. There may be in this block some piece which appears defective. But it is necessary to take the whole thing as it is at the risk of disorganizing

everything. We do not replace a head or a hand in an ancient bas-relief. All or nothing! *Sint ut sunt, aut non sint!*

Catholicism cannot help being intransigent in its dogmas. What might appear as a defect to the anxious, the doubtful and the troubled constitutes in the minds of others its strength. It would be inconsistent with itself if it admitted of discussion and compromise. In certain instances of practical application, we may indeed regret that it has set out on this track, but the track is formed of steel rails which cannot be twisted or displaced; we must follow them to the end. The charge which has been brought as a reproach against the Jesuits, "that they obey like a corpse," is only a figurative expression and describes paradoxically a discipline which is repulsive to some, while for others it assures tranquillity and repose! Alfred de Vigny interpreted this discipline admirably with reference to the army, and it is not an accident that Catholicism, which is a religion of peace, numbers so many passionate adherents among military men. The community of the faithful is an army engaged in a supreme struggle, where it is a question not of temporal life, but of the life eternal, and its effectiveness depends upon obedience. When one is firmly convinced of such a fact, one not only no longer hesitates to obey passively, but welcomes such obedience.

I have just alluded to the defects in the system. They do indeed exist. Every absolutism which has been delivered into the hands of one man or group of men inevitably drives the entire machine which is committed to it in the direction which its powerful master, rightly or wrongfully, has chosen. This defect

is heightened by the fact that this man or group of men, destined to direct with despotic authority peoples that belong to all races, are themselves of a particular race and therefore subject to the prejudices of their education and environment. Catholicism has not always been exclusively Roman, nor will it always be so. To refer only to French aspirations, we have known a time when the papacy resided in France. There was another time when our bishops were Gallican in their opposition to the Pope. The political situation has contributed in our day to make many of them ultramontane; and as long as our France remains divided, as it has so unfortunately been since the Revolution, it is perhaps better that the solution of some of our problems be handed over to a stranger. But that is by no means a necessity of religious orthodoxy. History has no sudden reversals, but it does have turnings. While we are awaiting what the future may bring forth and are determining our policy, it will seem to many that anything, even possible error, is preferable to chaos.

A principle radically divergent from Catholicism is represented by Protestantism, which numbers under its standards millions of Christians. Here the point of divergence seemed at first to be the direct return to the Bible as the source of authority. It led to the Bible being regarded rather as a fetish—a view which Catholics have never taken; and certain sects have adopted a formalism more literal than any Catholicism, although in appearance more confused. But many Protestants have been more devoted to the principle of private judgment, on the basis of which they have worked out their own religious ideas. It is not

by any particular dogma—essentially metaphysical—or by any subtle interpretation of the text, or by this or that practice, that Protestantism, when it is true to form, is most distinguished from Catholicism: it is by the fact that it has substituted rationalism for the principle of authority. Where the Catholic leaves the solution of dogmatic questions to the clergy, whom he considers more enlightened and competent than himself, the Protestant, in the sense in which we now commonly understand the word, endeavors to solve them himself. Aside from a few sects which hold an essentially Catholic position, Protestantism has thus taken on the character of a religious philosophy; and just as truly as Catholicism has fallen into exaggerations in the direction of rigidity, Protestantism has, in its more advanced groups, accentuated the right of individual interpretation as its chief *raison d'être*. Ampère once made a very just observation in this connection: "Protestantism limits God to half a miracle."

The fact that Protestants agree among themselves that they will find the truth of Christianity through the rational interpretation of a sacred book, and forthwith arrive at two hundred different kinds of truth, does not inspire a great confidence in any one of those truths. A certainty, even though illusory, is on the contrary a great source of joy. However, this semi-rationalism of Protestantism has enabled it to hold many adherents, but often on the condition of degenerating into a mere "religiosity," which has occasionally been referred to in this book—a purely moral Christianity which abandons the divinity of Christ. It would be wrong to blame Protestantism for this, as it would be wrong to criticize Catholicism for the

solemn proclamation of new dogmas. On the one hand, there is permanent organization and respect for tradition; on the other hand, individualism and a readiness to examine all new discoveries. The Protestantism which does not halt half way is the more consistent, and thus demonstrates a capacity to satisfy such minds as have a tendency toward Christianity, but would never accept the submission which Catholicism demands.

It is in short necessary to bear in mind, as I have remarked before, that all men are not constructed on the same model, as some theorists would have us believe. From our present point of view we may classify them into two opposite groups.

Those belonging to the first group experience the need of acting upon others; they are sociable; they find a joy in commanding, but they also realize the necessity of obedience. They resign themselves to momentary submission in the hope that they may later impose their will on others; or else they convince themselves that organization and order are necessary. The form under which decisions are imposed on them makes little difference, or the kind of government which rules them. Under one name or another—council or academy, universal suffrage, parliamentary monarchy, dictatorship or czarism—they admit the necessity of submitting to an outside power. The second group is more individualistic. People of this sort prefer to isolate themselves without either commanding or obeying. They prefer to run the risk of going astray by seeking their own way in an unknown city rather than ask their way of the passers-by. They enjoy working things out for themselves. From a

social point of view they render less immediate and concrete service; nevertheless, they do have the advantage of blazing new trails.

Among those whom I am addressing and hope to convince, the majority doubtless will not lightly renounce their private judgment and submit themselves to others; they will prefer to continue to choose, to take or leave according to their taste. For them Christianity will be identified with the type of Protestantism which usually takes the form of adherence not to dogmas, but to Christian principles. This is the form of Protestantism of which I am now speaking. Experience, however, also teaches us that there are many men who pass suddenly from extreme independence to extreme subjection, just because they have suffered from too much wandering and from searching for a way which cannot be found in the dark; from being isolated and out of touch with other men. The latter can leap with one bound into Catholicism, and even into monasticism. To become a monk is to attain to well-nigh complete repose of soul, a supreme peace whereby without abdicating either life or effort one voluntarily renounces one's own will.

We are all stricken in various degrees by this modern malady, which leads in turn to the feverish exaltation of the active faculties or the paralysis of the will. Constituted as we are materially and physically for the life of the instincts, whether passive or active, we have presumed to reach too quickly the ultimate goal of evolution by overdeveloping our brains, and we therefore experience frequent fatigue from the effort of seeking, thinking and willing. At such moments the life of the Catholic cloister appeals to us as a refuge,

and this in proportion as our activities have been more intense and desperate. It is the isolation cure.

It seems indeed that we are actually witnessing the emergence of the same tendency in certain Protestant groups when nations formerly Catholic react to the opposite extreme toward the anarchy of atheism. The first are tired of liberty, as the second are of authority. It is the movement of a pendulum between two poles which attract or repulse in turn. Perhaps the day is not far distant when these old Catholic countries in their turn will become saturated with anarchy, in religion as in politics. For the great mass of the community we must admit that authority is useful and that they must be organized like soldiers. They lack the time to think, as well as the necessary adroitness of mind. They thirst for affirmations. What they formerly asked of religion they think they are finding to-day in the Communist doctrine, namely, certitudes. They seek everywhere for formulae and for summary answers to the philosophic questions which keep recurring, in order that they may return with a light heart to occupations which are more immediate, distracting or lucrative. One would hardly "make a hit" with a large audience if one merely presented to them the hesitations of research or of scepticism. The habit of reading the morning newspaper supplies each man with ready-made opinions. It would of course be wrong to suppose that in practice Protestantism is not given to making affirmations; nevertheless, Catholicism meets this need far better, and its dogmatic preaching in the setting of an impressive ceremonial would have continued to preserve its influence for a

long time had it not been for some stupid blunders, which have been chiefly political.

The religion of authority, of which Catholicism is the best illustration, has a social foundation. It exists because the race and the group have need of unity and stability; it is, if you will, a means of establishing the control of the race over the individual, while anarchical Protestantism is a revolt of the individual against the race. Once discipline is admitted, and authority accepted, the choice of this authority is no more than a question of practical application. There are only two forms of social life—submission to a government and anarchy; and the types of government among which our preferences may be divided do not differ fundamentally because our submission to them is more or less tempered with anarchy. In religious matters, the point to be decided is whether one should and ought to submit one's reason to authority. But when one has once resolved to accept authority, the question as to whether one should submit to a sovereign, a parliament, a syndicate, an episcopal see, a holy book, an academy, a pope, a council or a professor in the Sorbonne, has no longer theoretically any more than a mild interest. The Pope has been compared to the hand which marks the hour on the sundial of the Church. Whether one wishes to look up the official hour or determine for himself each time that he goes to take a train the exact height of the sun, it all comes to the same thing. Those who adhere to Catholicism are compelled to-day to regard the Pope as infallible when he speaks solemnly *ex cathedra*; but this obedience applies only to dogma—that is to say, to the domain into which our scientific logic cannot enter.

If the Pope should say that the sun revolved around the earth, that would not diminish in any way for a Catholic the probabilities which make him accept in a general sense the hypothesis of Galileo. The Pope declares to us that there are three Persons in the Trinity, and that these three are equal; science has nothing to do with that; if I am a Catholic I will accept it with confidence.

To sum up, we may say that Protestantism gives the impression of being more scientific and reasonable, and this renders it doubtless more attractive to many of my readers; but how many times have I already remarked that science and religion, as I define them, have nothing in common? If we feel the necessity for a religion, it is in order that we may escape doubt and uncertainty in regard to problems which the reason cannot satisfactorily explain; we have no desire to continue in uncertainty. What satisfying elements can there be in a Christianity which presents Christ only as a man like Plato or Socrates? I prefer it indeed to an absurd indifference to all the moral beauties of the Gospel. But this Christianity is a philosophy, a science: in other words, uncertain, changing, subjective, individualistic. Those who cannot find anything better must be content with it, as with any other kind of metaphysic. But in my opinion those who are so constituted that they can believe blindly will find greater peace of mind by surrendering themselves bound and fettered to the authority of the Church. Happy those who have faith!

Is the existence of a sacerdotal caste consistent with the essential principles of Christianity? It is easy to see that the Gospel has no more to say of clergy than

it has of rites and ceremonies. Such matters are barely mentioned until we come to the Acts of the Apostles. The good news of the Gospel was addressed to a selected circle, living on hallowed ground, where spiritual blessings were abundant and the manner of life simple. Those who reported the direct teaching of Christ believed that this life would last only a short time and that the end of the world was near, and therefore they were not greatly concerned with organization or practices. On the same principle, a small tribe has no need of magistrates. All the disciples who heard the immediate teaching of the Master may well be regarded as priests. But among the immense multitudes who soon accepted Christianity it became necessary to have a specialized hierarchy, just as authorized leaders are needed in every human society. This hierarchy grew stronger as the years went on. It is logical and proper that men whose whole life is consecrated to the service of God should be endowed with special gifts for this office and thus be able to support and guide the weak. The Catholic priest thus has some resemblance to the pagan priest, which some may regret; but this represents only a practical necessity inherent in every religion. In spite of this apparent similarity, it is easy to see that the Christian idea differs from the pagan, just as the Sacrifice of the Mass is more spiritual than the ancient pagan sacrifices. Catholicism separates the priest as priest from the rest of humanity; it imposes upon him austere duties; it isolates him and elevates him by releasing him as far as possible from the common occupations of everyday life which are associated with a profession, family, personal cares and pleasures; but aside

from his sacred functions it still regards him as only a man who shares our weaknesses and sometimes even our vices. The infallible Pope, sovereign pontiff of Christendom, submits himself in the confessional to a humble priest, confessing to him his sins and imploring absolution.

May we not say then that the clergy have sometimes committed grave faults and fallen into error without doing any harm to the essential principle of Catholicism? But this is what is implied by a sacerdotal caste. No pamphlet on the "Crimes of the Popes" could teach us anything further on this subject, nor change in the slightest degree the respect which a Catholic will feel not for the human representative of a divine institution, but for the institution which he represents. It is not the man whom we see in the priest if we are loyal Catholics; it is rather the visible symbol of the whole traditional authority of the Church. We go to him not to find human support, but to seek the word of God. If anyone feels incidentally that he must ask his human advice as he might that of a magistrate or a notary, he is not then directly concerned with religion.

In whatever concerns religious faith the Catholic priest is the appointed director; but Catholicism does not require in any way that the priest mingle in private or public life: and this is what is properly referred to as clericalism. It is necessary to call the priest into human affairs only for administering the sacraments; and among these only one presupposes priestly "direction," namely, confession. (Let it be well understood that I am not here speaking of the sacrament of orders.) This "direction" may be exercised in greater

or less degree, or even be reduced almost to zero, without departing from orthodoxy. One may be in good standing in the Catholic Church without having anything more to do with the priest than confessing to him annually and performing the penance assigned at the end of this confession. Is there not a distinct advantage even for the best of us in being able thus to obtain the independent and impartial advice of the priest, which will quiet our consciences with reference to the little daily laxities and compromises by which we allow ourselves to depart from our strict duty in the somewhat complex situations where our interest or our pleasure is at stake?

From this priest we receive spiritual counsel, not from a particular man designated by authority, whatever politicians may say. We are not drawn up in regiments under the marching orders of an arbitrary master. Every Easter the Catholic clergy teach from the pulpit that we may make our confessions to any priest we choose and wherever we choose, in case we feel that we are too well acquainted with our pastor or his vicar through the fact that we are so closely associated with him in the village or the little straggling hamlet. Perfect liberty therefore remains to us. The moral assistance of the priest is not imposed upon us, but it will seem more or less necessary according as our characters and our wills are strong or weak, very much in the same sense as we rely upon the assistance of a physician in sickness or of a guide in climbing a mountain.

Therefore we may say that the interference of the priest outside the realm of faith or morals—for this is what constitutes clericalism in its ordinary sense, and

has been properly called in question, as it touches upon all human interests—is not inherent in the spirit any more than in the form of Christianity. I shall come back to this later when I speak of the relation between religion and politics.

As to monks or religious, they have given occasion in the times and countries in which monasticism flourished to rather severe criticism, some of which was justified. I will examine later the charge that has been brought against monastic asceticism that for those who give themselves up to it, it is a foolish occasion of sacrifice, privation and suffering. This is not the offense which has ordinarily been alleged against monks in current controversy, as they have been chiefly reproached for their uselessness, idleness, ignorance, slovenliness or too great accumulation of lands and property.

The groups that are the most bitter in their attacks under this last head are the revolutionaries and the Socialists, who do not seem to suspect that monasticism exemplifies the only practical application of their theories. Nowhere except in the life of the cloisters have men succeeded up to the present time in effecting the common possession of property, an equality of work for all and disciplined submission to a single rule. It may be true that in some countries like Spain, where religious orders are numerous, this has resulted in a tendency which is weakening and sterilizing and harmful to economic and industrial development. This is the inevitable consequence of all Socialism, which suppresses initiative, competition and personal advantage, which are the chief motives of human activity. This defect is not confined to monks who

place their aims elsewhere and higher, who consider life in this world as negligible and whose sole end is the attainment of the celestial goal; but it may well appear as a defect for those who consider any preoccupation with the world beyond as an illusory chimera.

Let us ignore these defects of application and consider rather the religious life in its essential principle as understood by the great founders of the monastic orders. These orders may be divided into two main groups. One group is comprised of those who consecrate themselves to the service of their fellow-men: the care of the sick, the instruction of children, the propagation of Christian doctrine and morals. It is difficult to find fault with them unless we are violently prejudiced; and I will not lay stress on the fact that the wildest radicals who are so bent on driving the religious out of the hospitals, when they themselves have to be operated on, are glad enough to choose the nursing homes where they will be cared for by the "good Sisters." I prefer rather to devote this space to the consideration of the purely contemplative orders, which are much more subject to attack and in general are less understood.

We may study these orders from two points of view: that of the individuals who compose them, or that of the community. From the point of view of the individual, they are criticized by the advocates of a temporal happiness for indulgence in futile self-torture and aimless penances. But it must be admitted that every individual is free to suffer when it pleases him, even though his voluntary suffering may seem to others an act of folly. For my part, I should be more concerned with the fact that the joy of the monastic

life, though very real to the monk or nun, may appear to others as egotistical, and their lives useless to society. In the eyes of people of the world, this life of the cloister would seem to dispense too easily with the sharing in common work, cares, misfortunes, the ties of family life and friendship which go to make up human destiny. It anticipates the repose of the grave.

This criticism is perhaps sometimes justified by the facts, but it does not really invalidate the theory which inspires those who are imbued with true Christian feeling, for they have in view a unity more vast than that of our ephemeral earthly efforts—the eternal unity of souls. The monk who really understands the spiritual dignity of his vocation is never oblivious of the community from which he isolates himself not only (as is perfectly plain) when he devotes himself to work in the schools or the hospitals, but also when he consecrates himself to a life of prayer. For his prayer envisages all wretched and sorrowing souls who do not know how to pray; it infuses into them the spiritual vigor which they lack; it pleads for them before the throne of God. One of the most beautiful ideas of Christianity is that we are able to apply to one soul the merits, sacrifices, renunciations, penances and prayers of another soul. . . . They little understand who live from day to day absorbed in the task of making themselves comfortable and passing their time pleasantly in the luxurious car in which they travel along on their earthly journey. But let them realize that they will not vanish like smoke when the train enters the terminal; but that on the contrary real and positive life awaits them there! Then perhaps they will appreciate the service rendered by

those who are chiefly concerned with securing for them eternal joy!

I do not wish here to go further into this idea of merit, for it will be examined at greater length elsewhere. I am now merely trying to show what a good priest and good religious can and wish to be. Let us forget that all do not live up to this ideal! They are but human. No doubt we have all known bad priests who make their living out of religion, just as we have known unscrupulous scholars who live by science and not for science; we may have known religious who have sacrificed their fundamental duties to a sort of mystical indifference. I am not oblivious of the fact that convents have given occasion to innumerable abuses and that in the eighteenth century many of them were mere sinecures or prisons. . . . Furthermore, there are always lukewarm souls who make of the religious life a mere routine mechanism devoid of all feeling and thought. But whenever men visualize an ideal they should picture it to themselves in all its triumphant splendor, and not be content with a mere caricature of it. No artist ever fully realizes the beauty of which he has dreamed; but the sincerity of emotion which he puts into his attempt at expression is itself inspiring. The Gospel account of the miraculous draught of fishes ends with a deeply moving phrase, in which all the grandeur of ascetic Christianity is summed up: "They forsook all and followed him."

Another objection is often urged against Christianity, and that is the superstitious form which it has assumed for certain minds and which in an earlier period the Catholic clergy have been accused of encouraging when they made a trade of relics, votive

offerings, candles, indulgences, or conducted hotels for much advertised pilgrimages.

Superstition is a fruitful source of criticism against religion itself; for the distinction between religion and superstition is delicate and uncertain. One believes or one does not believe in the supernatural; but if we believe in it at all, why not believe in it wholeheartedly? Everything in religion will seem superstitious to the irreligious. The same thing is true of medicine: it is not a particular remedy that some people take exception to and sneer at; it is medicine in general. The mystic, on the contrary, is perfectly willing to overstep the boundaries which orthodoxy has laid down. One can no more prescribe a theoretical limit to superstition than to the miraculous. This limit depends only on ecclesiastical authority; it is the bishops, the cardinals and the Pope who must determine whether a particular form of prayer or a religious practice is approved or condemned.

Rationally speaking, we have no right to make a pronouncement on this question, since in the sphere of belief everything is by nature beyond reason. Our reason cannot strictly call any limitation final, even though it has been accustomed to do so. I am always coming back to these implicit postulates which are the basis of science itself. We may not say that physical coincidences produce a presumption of causality, nor may we dogmatize about exceptions to what are apparently natural laws, because nothing is strictly impossible or absurd, inasmuch as nothing is certain. Those who believe in the protective virtue of an amulet, a medal or a candle see in them something more than mere physical fact; they are pledges of the

divine mercy implored by this or that action, the primary intention of which is to bring the possessor into contact with God.

The criticism that I would bring against superstition is that it too often resembles a pseudo-science, like alchemy or astrology; it confuses with religion, whose proper domain is outside of and above matter, purely material phenomena. Paganism was also a pseudo-science, an interpretation of physical laws through the identification of the gods with all the forces of nature; that was the sort of *religion* for which Lucretius wished to substitute his atomic theory, and which he violently attacked. In modern religious superstitions paganism persists; Protestantism found this out when it attempted to destroy not only what Catholics regard as harmful superstitions, but also what the Catholic Church sanctions or tolerates up to a certain point, namely, pilgrimages, saints with special hobbies, holy water, propitiatory rites, the blessing of dogs, herds, vessels, aeroplanes, and so forth.

Whatever private opinion one may have on this subject, I cannot see any great harm in a poor woman's belief that she may be aided in the cure of her child by making the sacrifice of going to a distant church to pray, or spending a few cents to burn a candle there; or in an incurably sick man's thinking that he might find health if he were only able to visit a certain place of pilgrimage. . . . I would even go so far as to maintain that certain rites of a manifestly pagan origin appeal to me because of their great antiquity. I like to think of the hundreds or thousands of years during which our ancestors have put their trust in the per-

formance of these so-called magical rites, in the repetition of these forms.

Pascal said: "It is superstitious to put one's trust in forms and ceremonies; but it is to fall into pride not to be willing to use them."

PART III
CHRISTIANITY IN THE LIFE OF THE
INDIVIDUAL

CHAPTER VI

DUTY AND MORALITY

THE TWO PRINCIPLES OF LIFE: SUBMISSION TO THE INSTINCTS OR RESISTANCE. CAN MAN RESIST NATURE AND OUGHT HE TO DO SO? RENUNCIATION. SACRIFICE. THE ASCETIC ORDERS. SOLITUDE.

We might discuss indefinitely, and we probably shall discuss until the end of time, the dogmas of Christianity and the practices which flow from them, because metaphysical discussion leads us into an *impasse*, since no one has the intellectual right to affirm or deny what the rational intellect is incapable of determining. The conclusions which we shall reach in the following chapters will not, any more than the preceding ones, be admitted by everybody; but at least we shall here be dealing with our opponents on the same ground, and no matter how deep a gulf shall separate us in the beginning we must not despair of convincing them.

What remains to be said in this book may be summed up, under various heads, in the general postulate, admitted or denied, of *duty*: individual and social. We propose to examine the various applications of these two kinds of duty in two separate divisions of this work; but first we must consider the principle of duty itself.

This notion of duty appears to me, in spite of all contrary assertions, to belong properly to the province

of religion, the word religion being understood in the general sense in which we defined it in the beginning. When the theorists came together at the end of the eighteenth century to take up the task of reestablishing society and of regulating social life by legislation, they scrupulously elaborated and solemnly promulgated a list of the Rights of Man. They did not mention his duties; or rather, they assumed by a common confusion of thought that the law codes were sufficient to insure the performance of these duties.

This has not proved to be the case. The will of men, even though it were almost unanimous, can impose laws only through force, and against these laws people are morally free to revolt if they are strong enough, just as a nation which after a military defeat has concluded a disadvantageous treaty may resume the war as soon as it has reorganized its army, with the aim of reestablishing the former state of affairs. Obedience to such human laws is a practical compromise for the purpose of a temporary peace: it may be a useful compromise, often even necessary, but it possesses no inviolable character. Concerning agreements of this sort one may well say: "Truth is on this side of the Pyrenees, error on that"; for often all that is necessary to escape from their obligations is to cross a boundary. We are materially obliged to obey such laws because of the existence of an army and courts; because such obedience may be to our advantage; or because we are influenced by our surroundings. But we are not morally bound to obey them unless this obedience to the laws of the state is also imposed upon us by a religious precept. Doubtless the public authorities who are charged with

the enforcement of these purely human laws, which emanate from a temporary mandate and are subject to change at the will of the majority, often find it convenient to identify them with moral laws, which are superior to all legislative codes; but this is pure sophistry. Two brigands attack a traveler and say to him: "Let us vote among the three of us as to who shall have your purse!" Because they are two against one they pretend that the duty of the traveler is to deliver his purse to them, and that this is the *law*. It is plain that they care nothing for any divine authority; and indeed the distinction in principle between human and divine laws was classical even before Christianity. We may find an illustration of it in Sophocles' account of the admirable conflict of Antigone.

The introduction of a sense of duty into human life—an absolute duty from which no one may escape, even if he were alone on a desert island or an all-powerful monarch—this conviction of duty secures a stable foundation for morality and confines the capricious evil tendencies of the instincts within the rigid framework of the obedient will. This is one of the least disputed of the advantages of religion, at least of spiritual religion; and the opponents of religion, for the most part, can do no more than try to demonstrate that there is also a lay morality, a social morality, based on the dogma of human solidarity.

This is really to substitute one religion for another by an act of faith, which I must be willing to allow my neighbor to make, like any act of faith, although I am free not to profess it and it would not be binding on me if presented to me on purely rational grounds. In any case, this dogma of solidarity would lead us

only into the acceptance of the most primary duties toward our neighbors. It would require a more advanced idealism to add to them the duties toward oneself, as philosophers have done. Only religion can expand and spiritualize these duties by linking them with a vaster and higher solidarity than that which draws men together—the solidarity with the divine.

Without religion the standard of morality remains subject to the choice of each individual, who removes or sets up restrictions according to his own whim. What humanity is capable of becoming without religion we have already seen in the beginnings of the Roman Empire, during the interval between paganism and Christianity. Humanity then sank into an orgy of intellectual sadism and a wild pursuit of novelty in vice which brought no satisfaction.

The usefulness of a system of morality is freely admitted by all practical men, and secularists are now much more concerned with supplying foundations for an edifice which in our modern world has already been seriously weakened by the removal of its religious foundation than they are in undermining this edifice. But theorists like Nietzsche are often more logical, and their arguments, or at least their conclusions, exert an influence on the masses of the people, whom it is always easy to liberate, but difficult to restrain. In the mind of these theorists who are experienced in going to the bottom of things, morality is no more than a convention, utterly without value. Everyone, they tell us, should have the right to live his own life. Not only should there be no more morality, but they would also suppress solidarity, democracy, progress: everything in short which this *enfant terrible*

Nietzsche chooses to call the prejudices of the "tarantulas." We touch here on the treatment of a theory which substitutes contrary principles for the fundamental principles upon which religion bases its morality. Thus I am compelled here to deal with the social aspect of Christianity—to which I shall have to return later—at the same time as I am discussing its individual aspect. They are closely connected.

This discussion may be reduced to two essential points: first, can man resist nature; and second, assuming that he can, ought he to do so? Would it be to his advantage? The first question raises the whole problem of free will, which we must not fail to examine. If we answer this first question in the negative, it would obviously be unnecessary to treat of the second. If man is not free to repress his instincts, he is certainly not obliged to consider whether he ought to do so. It is not very evident why we should establish a police force if the acts of criminals are predetermined, as well as the acts of the police themselves, and the acts of neither can be changed in the slightest degree by means of a so-called will. At the most, criminals should be treated as sick men. Indeed the same philosophers who deny free will are usually the ones who teach that submission to nature is a duty; but they do not always see the connection between the two principles, nor realize how contradictory are the ideas of fatalism and duty.

The objection will undoubtedly be raised that the problem of free will is as difficult for the theist as for the materialist: in the one case, because of the divine foreknowledge; in the other, because of determinism. But we can readily see that the objection has not the

same weight in both cases. The materialist cannot help denying free will, and this negation is final. The theologians, however, have a satisfactory explanation, although at first sight it may seem somewhat subtle. It is that the notion of time, like that of space, is purely a human category, and if not subjective, at least alien to divinity. We cannot conceive of God without imagining him outside of space and time. The very word "eternal" is a verbal lessening of his greatness, since eternity implies duration, and this duration is merely a clumsy makeshift of our minds. The acts which to us appear successive are for God simultaneous; and from all time (since we must employ this word *time* if we are to be understood) God knows our wills. Jupiter alone among the gods was the prisoner of Destiny. The Christian begins by proclaiming divine and human liberty.

For materialists the impossibility of free will is not a consequence of the foreknowledge of God, since they have done away with God, but of the biological necessity which according to them determines all our actions. One can only wonder—and I shall come back to this later—how this machine which is so utterly passive has been able by itself to effect what they so complacently call progress. It is easy enough to raise the world with a lever and a fulcrum, but not without either fulcrum or lever!

Let us not be disturbed by violent but vain negations! In this connection, as with all metaphysical problems, it takes but little reflection to see that the most conscientious minds often permit themselves to be carried away unconsciously by the prevailing fashion. We all remember the time when the impossibility

of free will had become a dogma which it seemed childish to doubt. The world was reduced to a futile tournament of matter and force, imprisoned like captive swallows in a cage which was solidly barred from all finite influences. There was a common obsession that there was such a thing as a mathematical universal revolving in a vicious cricle. As Bergson said, they were trying to make the universe vanish in an algebraic smoke. Everything was supposed to go round in reversible cycles, and even those who declared themselves Darwinian never considered the possibility of a progressive evolution having a termination different from its beginning. That is to say, biology was forcibly adjusted to algebraic formulae, just as physics and chemistry had been before. After this, these thinkers boastfully proclaimed that nothing existed in the world but equations—the equations which they had put there!

Another conception has recently been introduced into philosophical thought with the aim of freeing us from these algebraic shackles, which for thousands of years previously humanity had ignored and which some of us had begun to bear impatiently. This conception was that the curves of phenomena were not necessarily circular and closed, but could remain open and lead from the infinite to the infinite like the straight line or the parabolic curve. Thus the common notion of time was reconstructed, since the living human being had undergone an evolution. . . . “From this evening on we shall no longer possess our souls.” . . . Thus also was reconstructed the empirical conception of the will, since the curve followed to its end no longer leads inevitably to our point of

departure, but remains subject to the forces emanating from the individual who, throwing out his harpoons, hooks himself more or less firmly to the divine force.

We are, to adopt a formula of Bergson's, capable of being set free rather than actually free. We may be likened to a man swimming upstream, with this difference, that we are able gradually to increase the force of our resistance against the current until we render it negligible.

Our acts are influenced by our whole previous experience, but not determined by it; for we are able at least on those exceptional occasions when we strive against the current to add a new component part to the combined forces which rule us. A free soul is submerged by a flood of instincts whereby is brought about an interpenetration of the senses and the exterior world with its automatic reflexes; but eventually the soul through the assertion of its freedom is able to rise to the surface and impose its resistance on the current.

Whether or not we accept the new view that is symbolized by this illustration, it is nevertheless a mistake to allege that science has demonstrated the impossibility of free will. Some scientists have thought that this impossibility was a self-evident truth; others were more impressed by the contrary evidence; since there is this conflict of opinion we have the right to impose silence upon this philosophic chatter and to prove our liberty of motion by walking.

The discussion is then transferred to another sphere. While admitting that man may resist nature, many philosophers, even those who profess a somewhat spiritual view of life,¹ maintain that he ought not

¹ P. 41.

to do so, because being one with the great universal spirit he ought to submit to the general movement of this spirit, like the cells of a living body which are not liberated except by death. . . .

If we do not believe in free will, all that goes without saying and need not be emphasized. The word duty then has no meaning for us, since whatever we do or whatever we think we are doing, we cannot under this hypothesis alter anything that immutable physical laws have determined in advance. But we may be quite sure that our effort to change conditions may be efficacious, since we are asked to give up making such an effort. We are free, although our opponents do not wish to admit it and urge that we reconstruct ourselves voluntarily as submissive slaves. Here we are in direct conflict with Christianity; for, according to Tertullian, "Christianity has not brought peace to the world, but war; the soul has become a field of battle."

It is not only Christianity which is at stake, but the very foundations of morality. For those who ask us to obey nature just as soldiers in an army obey the general orders of their commander, and who urge upon us submission and discipline in the name of universal solidarity, ought to realize that they are selecting arbitrarily out of all the instincts which are equally strong within us only those tendencies which happen to please them. They describe these tendencies as natural, thinking that in this way they can eliminate and counteract the impulses which are none the less real and natural, but do not happen to fit it with their purposes. It is not from the point of view of individualism, but from that of solidarity, that I shall

attempt to answer them by proving that human evolution has come about by virtue of the impulses which control our lower nature, which are alleged to be so harmful, and in the direction of these impulses. The examination of individual life will lead us to the same conclusion.

What ground is there for supposing that discipline must necessarily be passive? If it is to be effective I should think it must be active. The spectacle which the world presents to me is not one of repose, or even of a uniform and coherent motion, which gives the impression of tranquillity; it is rather that of a whirlpool in which there are conflicting currents, in part neutralized by each other, which tend toward the working out of a purpose which history reveals to us. . . . Now I contend that, if humanity, which on one side is akin to the angels, should sink back again to the level of the beast, an isolated individual here and there might determine to go contrary to the general trend by swimming against the stream. For seeing as I do that humanity began with the anthropoids of the Cro-Magnon race or of the Chapelle-aux-Saints and has produced such characters as St. Vincent de Paul, Pascal, Rembrandt or Bach, I cannot easily understand why I should now be rather bidden to follow the class of individuals, however numerous they may be, who are rapidly returning to the primitive state by pursuing doubtful pleasures in carnivals, places of amusement or cabarets. If what we call the soul is a conquest of evolution, the first "law" of nature compels us to defend this marvelous conquest.

Experience teaches us that there are in man two instincts equally in evidence: the one egoistic, the

other altruistic. By a singular inconsistency, it is precisely this altruistic instinct which is attacked in the name of solidarity by those who would discourage us from the Christian combat. For the altruistic instinct is that which in spite of our immediate desires impels us to devotion, love and sacrifice; it is that instinct which motivates the spiritual struggle advocated by Christianity; while the contrary instinct, which prompts us to seek for the selfish pleasure of the moment, is a pagan instinct. How could this altruistic instinct exist in nature, where it is constantly combatted (short of being miraculous), if it were not itself "natural"?

I am well aware that my opponents wish to interpret altruism as a collective egoism spread over a long period of time, infinitely longer than human life. But if it is assumed that all ends with death, no sensible man would wish to exchange the pleasure which he may immediately enjoy for other pleasures, however great, which his fellow-men might enjoy, thanks to his self-abnegation, when he himself shall long since have been annihilated. For the man who considers only his own pleasure during this life, a relentless logic compels egoism; and the egoistic instinct is already so deeply rooted in us through atavism that it easily becomes exclusive when we abandon ourselves to it. The altruistic instinct, on the other hand, is a more recent acquisition of human effort and requires cultivation if it is not to disappear.

In advocating "submission to nature" secularists are appealing to a short-sighted egoism and therefore they obtain an easy success; for it goes against the grain not to be egoistic and short-sighted. **Every**

human advance requires an expenditure of energy, and even if this effort should result ultimately in profound and lasting joys, nevertheless the strain on the muscles produces fatigue at the start. Most men have always preferred to give in to their first impulses, and some of them in order to justify themselves in their own eyes have felt it necessary to erect their feebleness into a system. In that case the flesh dominates and controls the passive self. But with other men the rider masters his mount: whips, spurs and leads her according to his will, giving only such thought to her needs as may be necessary to keep her in fit condition for travel. However, this very struggle of the ardent horseman against his fractious mount may result in opening up new paths and hitherto unknown stages of progress; for the steed if left to herself will always return to her stable in the evening.

Taking by itself then, this effort which in Christianity has reached its zenith, but had begun a long time before Christianity, has finally resulted in what is called evolution. The egoistic and centripetal instinct which makes for assimilation, nourishment, growth, self-defense, healing and reproduction—everything in a word which goes to make up material life—preëxisted in matter; and the crystal of quartz or calcium maintains the struggle for life in almost the same way as an aggregate of cells. But the thing which from the beginning has characterized life properly so-called is a certain leaven which cannot be explained by chemistry and physics, but has made the living being an agent of resistance to his inherited tendencies. This has led him progressively to change his nature in the direction of independence, while the

crystal always obeys the geometrical symmetry of its crystalline system. The acquisition of this new principle was what in the first place distinguished the human being from the ape, which he seems in his physical nature to resemble. Although developing along with an almost unchanging egoism, this power of resistance has taken the form of altruism. Our ancestors struggled to become men. We must struggle to become more than men. Humanity itself is not the final goal.

It is amusing to-day to see how those who advocate submission to nature often proclaim themselves at the same time evolutionists, even in the most extreme form, simply to be on the side opposite to the clergy; while the fact is that if their ideas were put into practice this evolution would immediately cease or return to its point of departure. If evolution has proceeded as they imagine, it is because the primitive gorilla of the African forest resisted its ape nature and thereby succeeded in becoming human; it was a similar resistance that enabled the ape to evolve from the protoplasm of the primeval seas.

We must insist on this point! The struggle toward higher things has for its end not only the progress of the individual, which Christianity has primarily in view, but also universal progress which will finally result in the complete happiness of humanity. For every modification which we succeed in impressing upon nature is cumulatively perpetuated in our descendants, where it not only registers the stage attained but gives an impulsion toward a new stage. Man is thus characterized by thought, conscience, the beginnings of freedom of the will, just as the bird

is by its wings, or the carnivorous animal by its ability to spring suddenly on its prey. For this reason, man is morally obligated to continue making effort if he wishes to serve the best future interests of human society; and this is what Christianity means by bidding him act in conformity with the will of God. There is therefore complete accord between the interests of the race and the principles of religion.

Assuredly this will necessitate the renunciation of some ordinary pleasures, along with softness or sensuality. The strain of self-denial may cause fatigue, but it will eventually produce results worth while. But it would be wrong to suppose that this renunciation does not bring immediate compensation. The most elementary experience teaches us that man finds physical joy not only in eating or drinking, but also in the intensification of his energy by the development of all his powers. He must add to this the intellectual pleasure of being admired or even of admiring himself—one of the forms of that self-love which a great misanthrope asserted was the underlying motive of all our actions. In order that man may be led without the assistance of reason and faith to practice what Christianity calls the “good,” there is no need to use violent methods; it is sufficient to place him in an atmosphere where such disinterested actions meet with approval. Whenever we find to-day entirely apart from the old spiritual influence of the Church the rudiments of secular morality, it is a morality that is prompted by its surroundings, a sort of group morality which may be explained by the fact that man, living in society, can hardly escape from seeking the approval

of his daily associates who are interested in particular forms of virtue.

Thus while all vices and crimes are allowed or tolerated, only such trifling acts as may injure one's social set remain forbidden. The individual will resist the temptation to give in to an immediate satisfaction as a point of honor in order to avoid the censure of those with whom he lives. Thereby something resembling a moral system is being established. A merchant who does not hesitate to give false measure will recoil before a profitable proceeding in bankruptcy; a gambler will steal or allow his debts to be paid by a woman in order to discharge a debt of honor incurred in a game; a soldier will commit all sorts of murders, thefts and arsons, but he cannot tolerate being called a coward; an apache will, even before the judge or the executioner, be loyal to his companions in crime.

To create and encourage this moral atmosphere by inspiring all with the conviction that virtue in its integrity is superior to vice constitutes one of the most evident social advantages of religion. Those who allege that "vice" does not exist, and who believe that a tiger when he tears quivering flesh is no more vicious than sulphuric acid when it is combined with potassium, generate—whether intentionally or not—a corrupting atmosphere, which will quickly lead society into disintegration. The instinct of "honor" might outlast for some time the spiritual religion from which it proceeds; but an inconvenient instinct whose foundation has been removed quickly disappears. We see this happening in our day in connection with the instinct of modesty. . . .

It may be said that I am here taking too materialistic a point of view, one which has no connection with idealism, as if it were only a question of leading the individuals who shall compose future human groups to live harmoniously together in society. This accusation comes with greater force in view of the fact that idealism, although an artificial and relatively recent acquisition of the human race, is just for that reason the very element in human progress to which many attach the greatest value. Indeed all the characteristics which distinguish a human being from his ancestors and cause evolutionary progress are quite as artificial and acquired as idealism!

Let us continue to leave on one side the idea of divinity. Humanity has evolved from matter by certain abrupt differentiations which the theist would call special creations. This could only happen through the birth of abnormal individuals, monstrosities of the species, destined, however, in spite of their exceptional character, to prevail over the rest of their kind by the law of natural selection. These "freaks of nature" appearing in a uniform race have been looked upon by their companions with astonishment, perhaps with horror. When after the lapse of centuries their peculiarities have become general, standardized and normal, these ancestors are hailed as forerunners, geniuses, "supermen." They alone, "who were not of their time" and did not conform to the law of their group, have turned the race in a direction which to us theists is determined by God, and in the minds of all men is the direction of progress. It was their individualism, their revolt against the shackles of an inferior group by which their companions attempted

to hold them enchained, which have finally resulted in the creation of the human race, by the intervention of a strange power—to which we give the name of God. It is a principle of mechanics that a constant force produces a uniform motion. If this motion is to be modified, it can only be by the intervention of another force. A machine perfects itself only if it is in the hands of a mechanic. The faculty of free will, whether illusory or real, is to-day the possession of all men. If the end of life is happiness, there is no need in human nature more absolute, intense and exclusive than that of freedom. And I cannot for my part see, outside of religious faith, any other adequate reason for human existence than the participation in this universal progress toward divinity.

However, for a Nietzsche such notions as morality, devotion, renunciation, sacrifice or pity can only diminish, abase, enfeeble and enervate man, a superior animal made to *enjoy life*. Let us provisionally admit this axiom! It remains for us to define this joy which man *ought* to pursue (always the word duty!), and to compare the various forms of pleasure in order that we may give preference to one or the other. Is happiness to be sought in repose or in activity; in the soft relaxation of all the muscles along with inertia of the nervous system, or in straining them even to the point of paroxysm? I have already said that physical instinct impels man to action because he is organized for action. This is the joy pursued by all lovers of sport and in the sphere of morals is the well-known pleasure of “playing the difficult part.” But I need not say that in making renunciations and sacrifices the Christian is not only obeying an impulse of his

nature—like new ground emerging from the water—but he consents, desires, wills this renunciation; and it is in this act of will, this triumph over nature to satisfy a higher law, that he is completely happy.

Between those who hold that "happiness is in resisting" and those who hold that "happiness is in submitting," we have already made our choice; we find more "pleasure" in rowing against the current. But the term pleasure which I have just purposely made use of immediately provokes the objection: "Your pleasure is the satisfaction of the dilettante who does not have to earn his living; it is a refinement which is artificially imposed upon the normal conditions of life, instead of forming an integral part of life." . . .

How is it then that Christianity found its first disciples among the workers and the poor? How is it that so many of the disinherited still cling to it with a stronger faith than that of the rich and the idle? If our actions are, as Bentham taught, mechanically determined by the balancing of advantages to be gained, why is it that for nineteen centuries so many men have persisted in throwing false weights into the balance? For determinism, error in choice could not possibly exist. How could you prove to a man who is happy in sacrificing himself and derives thereby a legitimate satisfaction that his happiness, so profoundly felt, is non-existent and stupid? . . .

It is true, however, that if the Christian does realize a present happiness through the practice of his religion, he does not seek this happiness directly. He looks higher and farther. The notion of sacrifice is closely bound up with the fact of redemption, which

is the very foundation of Christianity. God has given us the example of sacrifice by suffering and dying on the cross for the redemption of men. He became incarnate, not, as the pagans pictured their gods as doing, in order to deceive Leda, Europa or Danaë, but to share the sufferings and weaknesses of men and to teach us how to bear them. In undergoing voluntary suffering the Christian is only imitating the divine example: he is spiritualizing his material nature; he is preparing for his eternal life.

We are not now speaking of those, who are very numerous, for whom this great example of the Crucified is a consolation and a comfort in involuntary sorrow, suffering or trial. The ghastly image of Christ, emaciated and sorrowful, of which modern pagans disapprove, because they prefer the splendor of the ancient forms as chiseled by Praxiteles, saddens them and condemns their carelessness or cowardice; but it is sweet to the contemplation of the wounded, the sick or the dying. It teaches them that suffering is transient and that it cannot touch the essential part of our being, the immortal soul. But the Christ on the cross teaches us even more: he teaches us to seek sorrow, to welcome it, in order that we may purify ourselves by penitence and make expiation for our own sins, or—what is still more beautiful—for the sins of others.

I do not wish to sugarcoat and spoil Christianity and thus make it easier of acceptance. It is certain that Christ imposed on his disciples a spirit of renunciation which begins by wounding our self-love and demands of us stern effort. We never perfectly exemplify such teaching; we only make feeble attempts to ap-

proach it. For the wonderful charity of a St. Francis of Assisi is the only charity that is consistent with the teaching of him who said: "Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor!" . . . "Take no thought what ye shall eat!" . . . "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead!" . . . But these privations are not presented to us as sufferings, hardly even as trials; they are the essential condition of happiness . . . "Enter ye in by the strait gate!" . . .

The proper characteristic of the true Christian is that he does not confine himself to the accomplishment of the strict moral law, to being generous or devoted, to enduring without a murmur physical or moral suffering—as might be done by a Stoic, a Moslem, or a Buddhist. He goes further: he loves the suffering which is imposed upon him, which he regards as a test; when necessary he seeks suffering. His eyes fixed on the crucifix where the work of redemption was accomplished, he sees the hand of God in his evil plight. He blesses the hand that scourges him in order to purify him. The characteristic sign of the Christian is the sign of the cross, as for him the humiliating cross on which slaves were executed has become the symbol of honor.

However, let us be on our guard! A Christian will not push the spirit of sacrifice and penitence to the extravagant lengths of certain Oriental religions—to the point of mutilation or suicide. He will not allow himself to be crushed by the car of the Juggernauts. Even the somewhat Asiatic exaggerations of Carmel or La Trappe may be justified, as we shall see, by the principle of generous devotion which throws them into the divine balance for the redemption of the sins of

the world. There are, moreover, rare exceptions, the multiplication of which the Catholic Church does not encourage; and the opponents of Christianity are much mistaken—I shall later show more at length—if they think our religion consists only of funereal images, lugubrious thoughts, an eternal *Dies Irae*. The God of Golgotha is also the God of the feast at the house of the Pharisee and of the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee.

This reproach, however, is one of those which have been most often brought against Christianity in these latter days by the superior sceptics, to whom it has appeared spiritual or original or simply convenient to attack in the name of “nature” the idea of Christian sacrifice, and to continue their attack even against the most simple survivals of Christian morality in an age of materialism.

Before we permit ourselves to be dismayed, as these sceptics profess to be, by the loftiness of the spirit of the Gospel, let us look a little more carefully into the essential principle which inspires it: this present life is so insignificant a thing that it is logical to sacrifice everything to gain moral perfection, whereby the eternal welfare of our souls is assured! . . . If this future life still seems to sceptics uncertain, so that they hesitate to sacrifice for it present pleasures and advantages, at least they might adopt the only point of view which is suitable for a philosopher! Let them regard all our tiny human interests, our lives so fleeting, our buildings so easily destroyed, our achievements and satisfactions so ephemeral, from the distance of Sirius or Orion; will they not then conclude that the sensible thing for us to do is either to lie down and

sleep while awaiting death, or seek for a refinement of our moral personality and the progress of the race as our true destiny?

The idea of meritorious renunciation not only implies personal or altruistic expiation. It is also in harmony with the sentiment—independent of Christianity—that it is good to conquer oneself, to struggle against a bad instinct, to liberate oneself and make the will triumphant. Every reasonable man must view the occupations, pleasures and ambitions of this world with the eyes of one condemned to death, resigned to an inevitable end which he patiently awaits. The Christian goes further: he has a knowledge of things which the unbeliever lacks and which enables him to pierce through the vain illusions of this passing world. He knows that God is everywhere, that God is immanent in everything, that he is the goal of all creation and that he alone matters. It is in God and for the sake of God that he loves all God's creatures. Under the visible and the tangible he constantly reaches after the invisible. Even physical suffering and moral grief become for him joys, if he believes that through his resignation in submitting to them he becomes more like God.

"But," we are told, "life is made to be lived; life is good in itself. Our reason commands us to love it and enjoy it, since the lot of every human being is first of all to live. Pessimism is fatal." . . . This is a misconception. Christianity certainly does invite us to love the life which God has given us; and the Church has always condemned suicide as a supreme crime, as irremediable, since this act of despair must throw the guilty man immediately without repentance

and without absolution before the tribunal of God. The inconsistent adversaries of the Church have even reproached her many times for her uncompromising attitude in refusing her last prayers to a suicide.

In her practice the Church has likewise always recommended, indeed enjoined, moderation instead of ascetic exaggerations. The Gospel allows legitimate pleasures, and Mary Magdalene was praised for having poured the expensive ointment on the feet of Jesus Christ. The rule of the religious orders allows hours of recreation.

Here I am again interrupted because I have called attention to these religious orders, which, I am told, are "a form of moral suicide, a self-destruction like that practiced by the Hindu religions, a foolish violation of the laws of nature." . . . We have already examined other adverse criticisms brought against monasticism. Let us consider only the criticism advanced on the ground of asceticism, and let us seek to discover the aim of such exercises, the severity of which terrifies us!

No doubt a strong and unusual faith is necessary in order to become a Carthusian or a Carmelite, and our modern minds enter with great difficulty into a mysticism so absolute as to eliminate the whole of the present life. It sacrifices not only permissible joys, but even the ordinary daily duties of life such as the duties toward family and country, in their earthly form, to think only of the eternal destiny of one's family or country. But if we shrink in horror from such resolution as inhuman, it is at any rate impossible to condemn them in the name of the only principles which our adversaries invoke, namely, personal inter-

est or solidarity. For if we look at it only from the selfish side, the monk or the nun often realizes the most perfect happiness; and if we consider the common ties by which all souls are bound together, the sacrifice of self for the eternal salvation of souls in danger is a high and noble conception which far surpasses the aim of a syndicate or a coöperative society.

Most monks or nuns who have freely and voluntarily gone into the religious life are happy, as are all those who have found peace in the observance of a fixed rule and an imposed discipline, all whose life escapes the anxieties and uncertainties of individual caprice, all who have indeed reached port. Their happiness consists in a state of perfect tranquillity, quietness and calm. The religious feels himself at one with God. At every instant of his life he knows what he must do, what he must think. The slave of a voluntary servitude, he regards himself as no more than an instrument destined to accomplish, within the feeble limits of his energies, the designs of God; and as he has faith he awaits with patience the final termination of a life which resembles a straight road, shaded with great trees, the shining vista at the end of which appears constantly on the horizon.

Doubtless there are also in cloisters secret sufferings and regrets caused by broken lives. But the monk who suffers thus has no faith; he is mistaken in his vocation, and his true place is in the world. The Middle Ages, which we are fond of representing as a great convent, were, whatever has been said of them, a very gay convent.

From a social point of view, the cloister is the realization of the ideal so ardently praised by many of the

political enemies of Christianity. It is the devotion to a common use of the efforts, the property and the wills of men. And from the point of view of the future life—the only end which counts for a monk—prayers said in common, prayers said with “intention” for other souls, penance and expiation, “applied” by pure and virtuous souls for the ultimate salvation of sinners, constitute the most perfect devotion, the truest imitation of him who died on the cross for the redemption of humanity.

Let us for an instant dwell on this thought, which seems so repugnant to the greater number of our contemporaries! Other times have seen among men associations for punishment, a sort of divine vendetta applied to a family or a race. The old Hebrew Bible had hard words for the sons whose fathers had eaten sour grapes and whose teeth were set on edge. Certain races calling themselves Christian still follow the abominable practice of giving hostages. But Christ proclaimed that sins were an individual matter. Merits only are not. He who prays or suffers voluntarily, he who makes a renunciation, may according to Christian teaching offer his efforts to the great Judge of infinite mercy and goodness on behalf of those who fail to serve him and pray to him. I will later return to this subject when we touch on the role of Christianity in the family and in friendship. I will insist then on the great consolation which those in pain or sorrow may find in feeling that they are mystically useful in circumstances where humanly speaking no sort of effort could be of any avail. The sacrifice of the Carmelite is of a more exalted order, since it is directed to the salvation of all unknown sinners, all

the miseries and weaknesses of a humanity alienated from God. . . .

A religious order is an association of those living in isolation and solitude, the number of whom must necessarily be small. But they have their place in the infinite complexity of temperaments and ways of looking at life. If we wish to understand the charm and sweetness of this life we need only read the first pages of that marvelous book, written by a monk and for monks, which is called the *Imitation*. The fundamental thought of these pages may be expressed in this cry borrowed from Seneca, which keeps recurring under different forms: "I have never been among men that I have not returned less a man." The first chapters might be regarded as meditations based on this text, without any reference to religious doctrine:

It is easier to keep complete silence than not to talk too much. It is easier to remain hidden than to behave with dignity in public. . . . The cell is sweet if one continues to live in it; and it becomes tiresome if one is always straying away from it. . . . He who goes out gaily returns sadly. . . . What can you see elsewhere that you do not see where you are? You have before your eyes the heavens and earth and all the elements. Are not all things in the world composed of these? What can you see here or there which will long remain stable under the sun? . . . Conduct yourself on earth like a traveler and a stranger who has little interest in the affairs of the world. . . . Everything passes and you will pass like the rest. . . . He is truly wise who

judges things as they are, and not according to the estimation of men. . . . He who is indifferent to praise or blame enjoys perfect tranquillity of spirit. . . .

It is not necessary to be a Christian in order to appreciate the interior life in which the human mind may concentrate itself upon what is enduring and renders life worth living, and to withdraw from all useless tumult. It is this tumult, on the contrary, which others hanker after in order to escape from themselves. How often we hear people say of an occupation or a pleasure that they have taken it up to pass the time, to kill time, to draw them out of themselves, to distract their minds! They keep flitting about, hoping doubtless that they will thus be less of a burden to themselves. Life is to them no more than a spin in an automobile. It is indeed a strange way of conceiving of human life, to employ the hours in vainly running about as fast as possible. How can we love and cherish a possession when our one concern is how to get rid of it?

This feverish agitation is the merest caricature of health, a futile movement like that of children or young animals for the expenditure of their surplus energy which they do not yet know how to utilize profitably for work. What little is accessible to us in the world is soon seen; our curiosity concerning things or books is exhausted in a few years; the circle of pleasures is restricted and monotonous. That is why people feel the need of seeking elsewhere, much nearer physically, but higher spiritually, the end which they have vainly pursued over land and sea. They

succeed in finding in their own thoughts concentrated in religious meditation the only companion who does not weary them; they pause, they recollect themselves and they are silent.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered, and said unto her Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things:

But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

CHAPTER VII

CHILDHOOD

ORIGINAL SIN AND BAPTISM. EDUCATION. FIRST COMMUNION.

A perfect religion should supply any man or all men, in every circumstance of life, in every class of society, with the counsel, direction, support or consolation which they seek and desire. Other religions may be more exclusively masculine, like Mohammedanism; or they may appeal only to the reasoned maturity of man, like some of the neo-pagan religions. Christianity alone speaks to all men. It takes the new-born babe from the cradle and guides him through life to the day of his death. Before taking up the later stages of his development, I should like to dwell briefly on his first years, which have so important a bearing on the rest of his life, for it is at this time that the child chooses one out of the numerous paths which stretch out before him and which later inevitably diverge, although he does not realize it at first, in such different directions.

The first intervention of religion comes at the beginning of life and is mediated through baptism. This initiation into Christianity, which was at first limited to adults, converts or neophytes in full possession of reason was later placed at the threshold of childhood. . . . Without baptism one cannot be a Christian. This rite incorporates one into the great community of

the faithful. According to the catechism, "Baptism is a sacrament which washes away original sin and makes us Christians, children of God, and of the Church." Being one of the fundamental practices of the Christian religion, it has been singled out for attack and derision. "What," people say, "because Adam ate an apple in the earthly Paradise, are all his descendants to be regarded as eternally guilty and excluded from heavenly bliss, unless we pour a little water on their foreheads and utter a sacred formula, by which the devil is expelled in Latin?" To jeer in this way is, as I have already said, to show how little one appreciates a symbol which is one of the clearest, most profound and most thoroughly in accord, I will not say with science, but with the ultra-scientific hypotheses in which the modern mind delights.

The devil is the source of the trouble. Original sin—that ancestral perversity of which man must rid himself if he is to be initiated into the pure realm of truth and admitted to the fellowship of the disciples of Christ and to a share in his redemption—what is it but the animal inheritance of which we are vaguely conscious and from which evolution is gradually setting us free? Our first parents were indeed enslaved in the bondage of sin. Adam, the ancestor who represents them and symbolizes them, by his own sin forfeited for himself and the race the supernatural life which he had received from God. We have inherited his misery and have retained the imprint, the atavistic mark of the past in our bad instincts, which are the fatal record of his misfortune and are transmitted from generation to generation. Other men, forerunners and prophets, have labored to lead humanity by degrees out

of this abject condition; and their work was definitely terminated when the divine Man whom we adore, by his death on the cross, redeemed man from his past, gave him the means of becoming one of the elect, a son and brother of the elect, instead of remaining in his former state, a sort of ferocious and lascivious ape. By this heavenly aid which was consummated on Calvary, we are enabled to make a free choice between these two pasts: the one archaic and lost in the obscurity of prehistoric times, the other nearer to us, in which man has appeared as truly human, endowed with free will and a thinking and acting soul.

This choice the godfather and godmother make on behalf of the new-born infant at his birth. The act is willed by the parents of the child in the place of the child himself. But is it not true that everything must be supplied for an infant; and has he not as great a need of spiritual life as of milk? Later the Church will invite him to renew and confirm his choice, which was involuntary, when as he emerges from the period of childhood he unites himself more intimately with Christ in his first communion. Thereafter, in all the choices of his life, if he remains loyal to this Christian spirit, he must still contend against the bondage of ancestral instincts and against the spirit of evil which constantly tends to enslave him.

Is the child then naturally bad and vicious, as St. Augustine teaches? This charming and exquisite little creature, this bud which is just bursting into bloom, this dawning life before which our paternal love thrills with ecstasy—must it be regarded as the diabolical manifestation of an original perversity? Some theorists, who have unfortunately had too great an influ-

ence on practical education, prefer to believe on the contrary that man is naturally good and has been spoiled only by education or civilization. "Everything is good when it comes fresh from the hands of its Maker; everything degenerates in the hands of man."

To believe thus in the inherent and instinctive goodness of the man or the child is deliberately to shut one's eyes to the facts, and to believe in a spirituality that is utterly unreal. The terrorists of 1793 almost all believed in this innate human goodness. We Christians are more realistic, for we cannot forget that man originally came from the dust of the earth. The child is neither a saint nor a sinner; he is a bundle of good instincts and bad—in proportions which vary according to his inheritance. But he has been endowed also with a spiritual faculty which enables him, assisted by the grace of his baptism, to fight against and conquer his evil tendencies. In his early years the child is hardly more than a pretty little animal, inclined to imitate others as well as to resist them; a feeble being who at times becomes possessed by a vague diabolical instinct, and then finds an amusing pleasure in doing wrong. His naughtiness, however, is easily overlooked, because it is not deliberate; and besides he is so little. But it will develop quickly into something serious if we are not careful! Before his birth he was entirely animal. Adam too was fashioned from some sort of an ape; and even after God breathed into his nostrils and he became a living soul he quickly became the guilty man, the carnal man. This twofold inheritance of divinity and sin, grafted as it was on inert matter, keeps cropping up in each one of us.

I do not pretend to know the precise moment at which the orthodox place the emergence of the soul in the embryo. Some theologians of a meticulous turn of mind have supposed that it requires forty-six days for the formation of a human soul. It makes little difference to us; but there is a definite moment when that which had been only animated matter becomes essentially a man. But it is evident that man is there only in germ. When the new-born babe utters his heart-rending cry, as he breathes for the first time the free air of heaven—like a blinded diver coming up from the depths who cannot yet bear the light—we always tend to see in him little more than an animal; and we are astounded that it takes so little time for this instinctive being to show signs of possessing a soul capable of reacting against his surroundings and exercising his will. We are amazed to see how in a few months, in a few days, he develops and completes himself; how he assimilates—thanks to heredity—such difficult notions as those of space and time; how he acquires or regains a conscience, a sense of duty and of guilt, the notions of good and evil. But however rapid this progress may be, the steps are gradual; and the result is complete only when education has intervened, not to force, but to direct, support and mold his development.

As Christians see it, this well-nigh miraculous transformation, which is symbolically described as the breathing of God into the nostrils of the ape, and which begins immediately to produce results, is greatly intensified by the constant succor of baptismal grace. Before the coming of Christ, before the first baptism, there were superior human beings who made progress

toward perfection by their own efforts; but baptism has brought this perfection within the reach of all.

I will try to translate into everyday terms the function performed by grace. This was once a question which aroused the most bitter controversies, just as political questions do to-day; but it has now fallen into the musty oblivion of theological treatises. Grace is at bottom synonymous with what we call the divine. When we say that human nature undergoes transformations which presuppose an external fulcrum for the lever of the will, when we are surprised to find in man a mysterious force utterly unlike the force of mechanics, physics or chemistry, the Christian calls this fulcrum, this strange force from without, this commingling of the divine with the human, "grace"; and he believes that this constant assistance of grace is assured to the faithful through their baptism.

Baptism, however, is not the only contact of Christianity with childhood. While other religions have despised or neglected children, somewhat as certain modern parents lose sight of their children through mercenary preoccupations, Jesus Christ—like all profoundly good men—loved even little children. It was he who uttered those gentle words: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The Catholic Church never forgets this command. On Good Friday, when she commemorates the most sad and solemn hours of the Savior's life, the dimly lighted nave suddenly becomes tremulous with shrill and unaccustomed sounds. The very little children, who can hardly speak, whose minds are just beginning to awaken, have been brought into the church, for this

day only, to enable them to take part by their presence in the adoration of the cross; and while the hymn resounds, *O crux ave, spes unica*, the interior of the church, ordinarily so austere and somber, twitters and chatters like a forest filled with nests in the joyous light of springtime.

I said just now that there is a certain perverseness in the child; but it is an innocent perverseness, because the will does not consent to it; in order to be repressed it must be foreseen; therefore we cannot be severe in condemning it, as we might in condemning a wrong committed by a grown man. On the contrary we should learn to appreciate at their true value the least efforts of these little children in the direction of good. These efforts may appear to us negligible because we judge them by our own standards; but they are nevertheless for such frail creatures not to be despised.

The teaching of Christ when reduced to its lowest terms is admirably adapted to children, for it may be summed up in the one word, *love*. "Love one another!" What better teaching can be given these little ones than this, which enables them to counteract the egoistic instinct which tends to dominate them—as it does us—if they do not keep up a constant fight against it?

The Christian education of young children has in view two important ends: the fixing of the habit of prayer and the development of the conscience. When the mother joins the hands of her little child and makes him repeat after her words which he only dimly understands and teaches him thus to pray to "the good God," we should not look upon it as a merely

mechanical act, but rather as the implanting in undeveloped minds of a higher idea, which the grown man later will be able to develop to its fullest possibilities—providing he has been given the desire, the hope and the germinating principle. It is the early implanting of this mystical principle in the child's life which is so much reviled by our adversaries, and which they wish to make impossible by means of a secular education; because they are quite aware that the seed, in order to grow, must have been sown in good time.

It is the same with the development of the conscience. We all possess, more or less, vague notions of right and wrong. Sceptics would probably say that these are but faint traces in the memory of punishment received by our ancestors, in bygone ages, when they committed acts which society in its own interest condemned as evil. But whatever its source may be, this notion of right and wrong is essential for men living together in society; and if not developed early in life it runs the risk of becoming atrophied. Christian education is always looking forward to moral perfection. I know quite well that this aim is not always realized; there are in all social groups individuals who are ignorant and degenerate, with indelible animal tendencies, and whose examples are harmful. According to the parable in the Gospel, many seeds fall on rocky soil or among thorns; but that is no reason for not scattering good seed at random. In any case, the only way to counteract the bad instincts of the child is to appeal to his conscience, and awaken in him the feeling of responsibility and the desire to do well; to accustom him not to regard his actions as of no

consequence, but to scrutinize them, to control them, and to judge how far they may contribute to future progress.

Whatever aim he may pursue in life, every wise man who reflects before acting considers himself accountable both for his past actions and their consequences; or, to use the Christian expression, he makes an examination of his conscience. Titus did not have to be a Christian to say—to quote the words attributed to him after he had passed a day without doing any good: “I have lost my day.” What pagan philosophers had long ago made into a practice, after the example of merchants and business men in drawing up their balance sheets, Christianity has made the rule for everybody. It is symbolized by the beautiful figure of the Guardian Angel, who is placed in special charge of a human soul, to guide, counsel and direct him, and speak to him constantly through his conscience.

In the struggle for perfection, to which the child must devote his little energies as early as possible, and which he understands from the start much better than we think, the Guardian Angel represents the familiar witness, the friendly judge and the unfailing support. At the same time the child finds a more human example in him who is destined to serve as his model throughout life, namely, Jesus Christ. The emphasis laid on the childhood of God incarnate is a peculiar characteristic of Christianity and is not found in other religions. The Gospel recounts very briefly the childhood of the Savior; but the pious imagination of the Middle Ages has entirely made up for this deficiency by particularizing and developing the tableau of the crèche, and by writing a gospel of the infancy, to

teach little children that the infant Jesus was their model, for he began his life by making himself like them and by sharing with them all the first weaknesses of our human lot. If you wish to propose a model, you must find one that is far above human attainment.

The Christmas festival and the traditions which cluster around it seem like a drama, a mystery play written for children; and yet they supply many subjects for meditation for people of mature years. A marvelous story it is (even if we look at it only as a story), in which the gentle animals are represented as looking down on the new-born Babe and warming him with their breath; then the shepherds guided by the star, and the three wise men, symbolizing the great ones of all the races of men, prostrating themselves before the divine Child; the fierce persecution of Herod which necessitated the flight into Egypt; the crossing of the desert in the arms of his mother, seated upon the humble, patient beast that was destined to appear again on the day of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem; the rest under the palm trees; the training in the carpenter's shop; the games with the little St. John; the precocious discussion with the doctors in the temple! Orthodoxy distinguishes between what is legendary and what is essential to dogma; it carefully eliminates the tales of the apocryphal gospels. A child is not so discriminating, and he is right. He admires and loves with all his heart the "little Jesus"; and when he is good himself he seeks to become like him.

What a pity to blow away the petals from the flowers of April and leave only thorns! That is what they do who would deflower the legends! The legends are

the element in history which is the most beautiful and often the most true (if so often imaginary when they gravely pretend to be exact). Moreover, our age is beginning to understand this and is on the road to recovery from the ailment—so common among the French—of making a joke of everything which it cannot comprehend. Not so long ago people of “superior” intelligence laughed at the Gothic sculptures, at the Bible, at the Crusades, at Jeanne d’Arc, at Nature herself, when she did not consent to wear a powdered wig, or allow her leaves to be combed like hair and her branches to be trimmed! The history of the past is not by any means entirely contained in the official journals, the reports of royal inspectors and the acts of notaries. Those who do not wish to “trouble” the mind of the child by teaching him anything beyond arithmetic, botany or the history of the Revolution—arranged to suit themselves—are preparing sad generations of mechanics, primary teachers, and compilers falsely called scholars, with never a new conception or even an idea. . . .

To be sure, we must not allow ourselves to go to the other extreme, as was the case when the teaching of history was confined to the Holy Scriptures and the lives of the saints. This conception of education might be abstractly defensible, at least as much so as that other conception which would omit all mention of wars and deal only with scientific, economic or artistic events; but it is plainly unsuited to prepare children for actual life in the world. Inasmuch as religion teaches us that our earthly life is to be lived in accordance with the will of God, we have no right to eliminate the material side of things which has been ordained

by God. It is right, however, that the child should become familiar, not only with the heroes, lawgivers, philosophers, and painters, but also with those who have lived saintly lives. I touch here very incidentally upon one of the distinctive features of Christian education; that its aim is not simply to instruct the mind and develop the muscles, but to inculcate the ideal of moral effort and the supremacy of moral virtue.

The childhood of the little Christian reaches its consummation in the solemn ceremony of "first communion." Coming at the age when the child is beginning to understand and appreciate the real meaning of life, this most intimate act of union with God is preceded by instruction, the learning of the Catechism and a retreat. In this retreat he learns perhaps for the first time what this life actually is, which he has hitherto regarded only as an opportunity for enjoyment. He then discovers suddenly what I am trying to suggest in this book, that our life in this world is ephemeral—like all human joys, ambitions, and work; that all does not end when we pass from this sphere of sensible activity; that the invisible is more important than the visible. Let us ignore, if we will, such teachings as are purely theological, to which the child pays little attention. These truths are taught him and he thinks he understands them, because he does not perceive as we do the difficulties inherent in them! At the very moment (or perhaps a little later) when he is being taught elsewhere how to reason, to argue, to make experiments, religious teaching is helping him to see that reasoning, discussion and experimentation do not apply to everything, but have their limitations. In the state schools he learns about the "rights of

man," but here he is taught the "duties of the Christian." He finally makes a review of his whole past life in a "general confession" of his sins, and thus with great emotion prepares himself to be a little pure white soul in order that he may receive God himself, whose immensity, condescending to his weakness and taking up a dwelling within him, fills him with wonder and happiness.

Let us not think of those dried up and withered souls who arrive at this critical hour of their life with a scepticism absorbed from their environment, which is wholly as unreasoning as the faith of others may be! We can see in many children, indeed in the majority, at the time of their first communion, a moral development, a tender awe, an awakening to serious thoughts, the effect of which may soon diminish to the point of disappearing; but these spiritual ideas and impressions have nevertheless wrought in them a profound transformation.

CHAPTER VIII

MATURITY

VIRTUES, TRIALS AND JOYS. MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD.

In taking up the mature life of the Christian I do not pretend to write a treatise on morals, but only to touch on two or three points which are of special interest. Later on I shall consider the part played by Christianity in social relationships, in the dealings of men with each other. Here, however, I shall confine myself to the individual life or life as limited to the family circle, and I shall reserve for the following chapter questions relating to Christian womanhood, which will require special treatment.

When the child once enters upon man's estate he leaves behind him the artificial circle, of which his parents formed the center and where the echoes of the external world reached him only faintly, and he comes into contact with the realities of life, its struggles, ambitions, trials and joys. . . . He must first learn to live this new life in obedience to the higher law of morality; subsequently he will come to see that it is a "journey," the first stage or the threshold of the life which is eternal. The first teaching which Christianity impresses upon him is that he will soon find himself engaged in a combat between virtues and vices; and that if he wishes to be happy in this world and in the next he must help the virtues to triumph.

In earlier times everybody was familiar with this conflict as represented and personified on the facade of our cathedrals: the twelve principal virtues in conflict with the twelve vices, the so-called psychomachia. The virtues, represented by virgins pensive or joyful, were carved on the pillars of the porch, almost on a level with the ground, within easy reach of the hands and eyes, as though mingling with the crowd of the faithful who elbow them as they cross the threshold.

These principal virtues as chosen by the Middle Ages were: first, the three "theological" virtues, faith, hope and charity; then, the four cardinal virtues—temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice; finally, in a more variable order, humility, chastity, gentleness, peaceableness, obedience, perseverance, and so forth.

This conception of theological virtues is a beautiful one and peculiar to Christianity. That is why it is necessary to lay stress on it here. While the other virtues for the most part might be equally pagan, these theological virtues have this unusual characteristic, that they proceed directly from the notion of God as revealed by the religion of Christ. As St. Paul has defined the matter, we begin by believing; we hope because we believe, and we love because we both hope and believe. Is faith perhaps then a gift rather than a virtue, is hope one of its joyful fruits, rather than a virtue? . . .

Faith according to St. Augustine is the virtue by which we believe what we cannot see. Faith is not acquired simply by desiring it; but neither does one succeed all at once in being patient, peaceful or persevering; and the primary duty of the Christian, or of

one who wishes to become a Christian, is plainly to advance with energy toward that faith, without which all the rest of the religious edifice will collapse. . . . We see in some of our old churches the figure of Faith holding a cross or filling a chalice with the blood of the Lamb sacrificed on the altar. The faith which the Christian must acquire is faith in the redemption, in the divine sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

It is a profound and touching conception which has made of hope a virtue; and at the same time it suggests an answer to those who claim that Christianity saddens and impoverishes this present life. As against the tendency of the impatient or the discouraged to look for human happiness only in the present, an almost elementary psychological experience demonstrates that we enjoy things much more in anticipation than in realization. This is not only because the realization is often disappointing, but also because it is always inferior to the form which our imagination has given it, and because the arrival at a goal after an effort leaves us with a painful sensation of weariness and emptiness. Christianity has exalted hope by setting before it as an object the only prize which matters—future glory in the presence of God—and by making it dependent on faith. Dante said: "Hope is a certain expectation of future glory, which produces divine grace and stores up merit." Hope according to the old sculptors of the Middle Ages lifts her eyes with confidence toward heaven and stretches her hand toward a crown. In the words of holy Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though . . . worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Finally, charity also for the Christian is a theological virtue, for it consists not only in loving and serving one another—as it is popularly understood—but in “loving God and one’s neighbor for the sake of God and in God.” This orientation toward the divine lends to charity such an aspect of grandeur that it becomes the supreme and almost the only virtue. As St. Paul says: “And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

Charity thus becomes a supreme act of faith and of hope; it tends to an intimate union with the Divine which cannot be realized perfectly until after death. And that is why theologians have said that it is the only virtue which is destined to continue in the life eternal. St. Thomas shows that one of the principal effects of charity is joy.

The God in whom Christians believe, as Pascal has said, is not a metaphysical God. To quote Pascal: “He is a God of love and consolation; a God who fills the soul and the heart which he possesses, . . . a God who makes himself felt by the soul as its only good; all depends upon him and there can be no joy but in loving him.” Even Renan in his youth testified to the sweetness which he experienced in “trusting his happiness to him whom one found everywhere and could not lose.”

The other virtues do not require minute examination. We need only remark that they relate almost entirely to personal duties rather than social duties. It is the latter which codes of law are concerned with

and regulate. The Christian should be gentle, peaceable, humble, obedient, chaste and persevering. It may be said that these are the virtues of a monk. But there is in addition to these virtues the virtue of strength as symbolized by a warrior in his armor, a helmet on his head and a sword in his hand. The strength of the Christian, however, is not provocative; it awaits all adversaries whether interior or exterior with a steady eye and lucid mind. . . . But this strength nevertheless, in spite of its warlike aspects, is essentially a spiritual quality, whereby the soul resists temptations.

I have just now in connection with charity several times made use of the word joy; but it is not merely a future joy that I have in mind; it is a joy that is truly present. I have already referred to it in speaking of monks; but this is perhaps as good a time as any to look into an old and persistent quarrel which has for centuries been carried on between Christianity and its critics. A saying of Tertullian embodies both the objection of unbelievers and the answer to it: "It must not be thought that the life of Christians is a life of sadness. We abandon certain pleasures only in order that we may enjoy others which are greater." Long before St. Paul had already said: "Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!" Dante is in line with the best Christian tradition when he reserves a place in hell for those who "had no desire for joy." St. Teresa of Avila, the austere reformer of the Carmelites, was distinguished for her gaiety. . . .

How can a religion which recommends renunciation and sacrifice be a religion of joy? It is important that

we should make this point clear in answer to those who compare the Christian to a fool who puts all his possessions into a lottery in which the great prize which he is always looking for does not exist.

Undoubtedly if it were indeed a question simply of sacrificing earth for heaven, one might be justified in saying: "Between the present instant and eternity there is only this fragile existence. What we may lose out of life is infinitely small and negligible in comparison with what we are looking forward to." But it is not thus that I would state the problem. Let us look into it a little more deeply and see what it is that we are called upon to sacrifice! At the most we are expected to give up a few sensual pleasures which "the decent man" (as he was formerly considered) generally regards as worthless, if not reprehensible and disgraceful. The attacks on Christianity are almost always made more or less cynically in the name of sensuality. But is it a question of rejecting any of the true and enduring satisfactions that are purely human, such as love, family, science, art, or even the pleasures of travel, the relaxation of physical exercise? Not at all. . . . What then are we asked to give up? Is there anything in the precepts of the Decalogue which is not confirmed by popular moral standards or which constitutes a real deprivation? Do we complain that we are forbidden to rob or to dishonor or assassinate our neighbor? . . .

Joy is not lacking in Christianity. Joy can be ours only if we know why we are living and if we look forward to consolation in death. Religion teaches us to love life as a gift of God; to love it as it is even with its miseries and pains, and not as we would wish it to

be. It is true that it teaches that this earthly life is not the whole of life, and that what is lacking in it will be made up for in another world: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." But it is not true that Christianity has ever taught that it was an evil to live in this world; it has always insisted on the enrichment and fulness of life and condemned under every form whatever makes for the annihilation of life.

"However," it may be said in reply, "Christianity is forever harping on the thought of death, and by doing this it spoils life." . . . Yet what sensible man ignores the fact that he is constantly on the verge of death and may at any moment walk over the edge of the precipice? Who can forget that everything around him is transient like himself and that he cannot possibly attach himself here to anything that is permanent? . . . The pagans indeed saw in this fact an excuse for epicurean pleasures. In the time of Petronius they purposely placed on the festal board a skeleton of silver or ivory to intensify the flavor of the feast! "The last act is always bloody, however beautiful the rest of the drama may be. In the end they shovel dirt on the corpse, and there it is forever." The quotation is from Pascal; but it was not necessary to be a Christian in order to write it. Christianity, on the other hand, succeeds in giving a marvelous sweetness to death, since instead of being an end it is looked upon as a beginning, the entrance upon an infinite joy, and because it has been willed by God who is supremely good, "without whom it could not have

happened, through whom only it has happened, and in the precise manner in which it has happened."

Another objection is raised, namely, that the terrifying thought of hell throws its somber veil over the whole of our present life. This is a question which I shall deal with when I come to the chapter on death. But this criticism is valid only in the case of distortions of the Christian religion, such as Calvinism or Jansenism. The man who has avoided wrongdoing does not feel any great uneasiness because a law provides the guillotine for assassins.

The Christian of fervent convictions thinks of death, but without terror. He prepares himself for it; but he enjoys while awaiting it the life to which God has called him, as well as all God's good gifts. The joy of the Christian resembles that of a child in its lack of anxiety for its earthly future, its freedom from all transitory cares, its fulness. It produces real happiness to become indifferent to the sufferings of self-love, avarice or envy. A priest among my friends who had gradually and lovingly collected a library of valuable books and manuscripts one day saw all these treasures which were so dear to him destroyed by flames. He told me smiling: "I was not overwhelmed with grief. I said to God quite sincerely, 'Thy will be done.' " He had found in his books an artistic satisfaction, as he might have done had he not been a Christian; but because he was a Christian he manifested in the face of the disaster a philosophical resignation which few philosophers without faith could have attained.

Here we have in a case not of vital importance an example of what should be the attitude of the Christian toward involuntary suffering. He accepts it with

resignation because he has previously become detached from the possessions of which he suddenly finds himself deprived. But another sentiment contributes much toward increasing his power of resistance. He feels that this suffering is not the manifestation of a blind fate, nor is it the temporary triumph of an evil and hostile power. It has but one end; it is imposed for his own good by a God who loves him as a father, but who also chastises him as a father, seeking above everything the perfection of his child; it comes as a logical consequence of the debt of sinful humanity; but also it tests our characters.

The very idea of punishment violently shocks anti-Christians; and on certain solemn occasions when a tactless preacher has presented it before a hostile audience, it has given real scandal. He who does not believe in God finds it very difficult when he suffers to believe that God is punishing him for a sin which he does not acknowledge; and it is certainly not desirable that such language should be addressed to unbelievers, as it will only make them more bitter in their suffering.

But let us for a moment admit the principle of vicarious suffering, as Christianity bids us. How our suffering is mitigated if we can look upon it henceforth as a painful but salutary treatment administered by a physician or a surgeon, whose bitter medicine and knife are used only with a view to curing the patient!

Tolstoi gave striking expression to this idea with his customary genius when, in *War and Peace*, the prisoner Bezoukhov meets the poor Karataief, who tells him the story of an innocent man who had been condemned in place of another. The agonies of this innocent person are unjust and cruel; but he does not complain of

them, indeed he hardly even feels them, for he endures them in expiation of his sins. He dies happy because of having endured this trial, at the moment when his innocence was about to be proclaimed. This may appear to us a resignation which is decidedly Slavic and fatalistic. But what would he have gained by raging and complaining, by cursing God and man? He had found a solution of his difficulty and a hope of drawing from it a greater good. Should we not congratulate him? Was there not here for him an immediate gain, and not simply a future one?

The righteous, we are sometimes told by unbelievers, are obliged to undergo the same trials and sufferings as the wicked, often even greater. But Christianity teaches the saints "that in this sublime state of vicarious suffering they are bearing the burden of the corruption of the race . . . just as religion pleads with the greatest sinners on the ground that they are capable of receiving the grace of redemption." The righteous, if they are at the same time believers, fully realize that their sufferings may be applied "to the salvation of other souls," that they are thus in a position to contribute to the moral redemption of all humanity.

Do not answer me with pleasantries from *Candide*, you who believe that the world is ruled mechanically and fatalistically as if it were a clock! For a determinist, the destructive earthquake with its consequent sufferings is without explanation. The murderer therefore cannot be blamed, since he is the result of all his antecedents, just as the combination of potassium and water invariably produces heat. Do you suppose that it would be any consolation in the mo-

ment of death for one who had been assassinated to think of his death as the necessary consequence of physical law, and of his assassin as his moral equal? Would this kind of argument contribute greatly to make him love a life from which has been excluded all idea of merit, reward and consequently of real progress?

Our solution, however ridiculous it may appear to you, is at least as good as yours. As William James remarked: "The dog writhing on the dissection table does not know what is the purpose of the one who is torturing him. But what the dog cannot, a man can do, namely, draw from his suffering a present and future personal advantage."

Indirectly, physical evil contributes to the life of the spirit. The man who had no body and never suffered, who never thought of death, who was not subject to death, would be no longer a man. Unless he could make himself one with God by an unrealizable perfection, he would be nothing. If his life had no termination, his actions would materially have no end, and spiritually no meaning. His life would become dissipated in an eternal weariness.

Whenever the Christian suffers, when his body or soul is lacerated, when his heart bleeds at the thought of a separation which for atheists is eternal, he hastens to the church; and there not only does he receive consoling promises in return for his faith, but he beholds the divine Model of the voluntary Martyr, who has permitted his body to be scourged, his hands to be pierced with nails, and even his soul tortured with bitter anguish, in order that he may teach us how to endure the supreme human miseries. He reverences

at the foot of the bleeding crucifix the Virgin of the Seven Sorrows, leaning over the dead body of her Son. The martyrs appear before him smiling, whether under the tongs, pierced with arrows or bound to the burning gridiron or the wheel. And in the darkness of the old church where the little flame of the sanctuary lamp burns alone like an inextinguishable hope, he hears the voice of him who is mysteriously present in the tabernacle: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!" . . . "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you!" . . . To quote a saying of Bossuet: "We need Christ not only in physical agony, but still more in mental distress."

Nevertheless, let us not forget this image of the sorrowing Christ, intended to serve as our example in pain, or that of the Virgin whose heart was pierced with the seven swords. These figures, which our adversaries describe as ghastly and which accentuate in the God-man his human character, represent recent interpretations of Christian thought. Roman art pictured Christ on the cross as on a triumphant throne, crowned, his eyes wide open, his head uplifted. Likewise the primitive Virgin manifested only astonished joy at having given birth to a God. The crucifix then was only a symbol of glory. It was at the end of the thirteenth century, when realism began to invade religious art, at the dawn of what is called the Renaissance, that they portrayed Jesus with eyes closed, head fallen forward, in the attitude of a dying man. This is not to be regarded as a deterioration of Christianity; but out of the rich assortment of sentiments and images which Christian meditation offers us, the

attention of the faithful is then particularly directed to a new side of the "imitation."

I do not need to enter into all the varied circumstances of a life which is entirely impregnated and inspired by Christianity; but I must dwell for a moment on the culminating human experience, the union of a man with a woman for the purpose of establishing a family. Here we are all in agreement: the pagans who are devoted to the Oriental Aphrodite, the generative power from which flows the incessant current of life, as well as Christians, to whom God has said, "Be fruitful and multiply!" When, according to the ancient Greek custom of the torch race, man transmits the ephemeral torch of life, thereby accomplishing the divine mission of bringing into the world another being, he attains a sublimity hitherto unknown and passes through a very solemn hour.

For the Christian marriage is a grave and indissoluble act: it is a sacrament. Man finds his complement in the woman who as in the days of creation is a part of him, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; and he marries with a view to parenthood, which even in the eyes of unbelievers consecrates the bond and renders absolute divorce practically impossible, if not criminal.

From the day that the child appears a man must take upon himself new duties; but he acquires also certain rights which his own unworthiness may take from him. This child does not belong to the community, which knows him only through an inscription in the register of births, and for many years has nothing to do even with his physical care. The Roman law gave full authority to the father, even the right to

take the life of his child; and if all fathers were good, if it were not necessary to make provision against all sorts of vices, errors and crimes, we might maintain (although here we would depart from the Christian view) that the Romans were right, even in going to this extreme. As it is unfortunately necessary always to keep in mind the real man and not the theoretical man, we shall not make any such claim as that. We shall limit ourselves to what is much more in accordance with the Christian religion, and consider simply the duties of parents toward their children.

This duty is the gravest of all, since it involves the responsibility for a soul, its development and its eternal destiny. Man has other duties that are further removed and more general, for which he often sacrifices, and sometimes must sacrifice his family. But the parental duty is an immediate, everyday duty, and it comes before most others, although it may be a painful one with little glory attached to it. It is, however, the duty for which we have been designated individually and by name.

Shall we allow a child, as some maintain that we should, to grow to maturity, without any direction, entirely in the state of nature, permitting him until then to make all his own choices, and especially the choice between idleness and work, between virtue and vice? Are we afraid to influence his free will? Have we not done so a hundred times over when we transmitted to him a heredity from which he cannot extricate himself except slowly and progressively, and to which we on our part have so greatly contributed? He is not the child of any father; he is our child. Even though it should be an unknown child that is entrusted

to our care—does a gardener wait until a plant is fully grown before protecting it from parasites, from frost and wind?

While the child thus finds a protection in his parents, his advance in education through the help of his parents establishes among all the members of the family a strong bond of moral solidarity which is a valuable asset in view of the serious ends to be attained: individual progress and the progress of humanity. Along the road which the father has already taken, if he is a good Christian, he encourages his son to follow behind him with a firmer step, and after this son the generations yet unborn.

Later on, when the child in turn has become a man, he will have duties toward his old father, who may be infirm or ill. Maturity must come to our aid at the end of life, as well as at the beginning. Thus the whole family forms a group which contributes to the present well-being of all and lessens the inevitable misfortunes and sufferings which must fall upon the individual, thus resulting in constant human advancement.

CHAPTER IX

WOMAN

CHRISTIANITY AND MARY. THE RELIGION OF PURITY. THE VIRGIN.
THE YOUNG MOTHER. THE SORROWFUL MOTHER.

The position occupied by the Blessed Virgin—or Our Lady, as she is commonly called—in the practical system of Catholicism is of capital importance. Owing to the tremendous impetus which was given to her cult in the thirteenth century, it has been increasing constantly ever since. This growth in devotion to Our Lady is perhaps due to the fact that men are more and more deserting the Church, and therefore its religious teaching and practice are addressed more especially to women. The cult of Mary has become so prominent that in entering a Catholic church, as we might enter a temple of the Far East, we might perhaps imagine, if we had no previous knowledge of the Catechism, that the Virgin alone, or in association with the other saints, is the primary object of worship. God the Creator eludes sculptured representation by the very infinity which is his essential attribute. We cannot very well picture him without falling into idolatry. Indeed if the frescoes or mosaics of our churches depict him at all, it is in connection with certain biblical scenes, as in the naïve imagery of Genesis, or again in attempts to group together the three Persons of the Trinity. The old man with a white beard who for-

merly personified the good God is used to symbolize his name. Christ, since he was made man, may be presented in his human appearance: in scenes from the Gospel, as the symbolical Good Shepherd, or in the crucifix. But Mary, who was only a woman, holds a still greater place in this modern devotional life, and her miraculous appearances have undergone a development which we may consider exaggerated.

This importance given to Mary is in many respects superimposed upon the narratives of the Gospel, in which the function of the Virgin is reduced almost to the point of serving as the human link in the fulfilment of the messianic prophecies, and in which she effaces herself almost as soon as her Son becomes a young man, to reappear only at the conclusion of the sacred drama. Then too Protestantism has attempted to suppress her, just as it has eliminated the saints from its practical system; and this fact gives it a more exclusively masculine aspect. I have already said what I thought of these "primitive" attitudes of mind.

Once more let it be said that we should not scrap all the ornaments of our cathedrals, or destroy what time has added to them, with the laudable intention of restoring a "purer style." Let us not be "reactionaries" under the pretext of "progress"! The evolution in the natural world which was brought about spontaneously had its causes and corresponded to a need. An oak tree grows gradually and shoots forth the branches which are implicitly contained in the acorn. We are not so foolish as to attempt to reduce it violently to its acorn state. . . . Neither should we permit development to go too far. According to Pascal he who wishes to create an angel must remember

the beast. We are dealing with human beings. Mary, like the saints of whom we have already spoken, stands for a perfection which is almost realizable by human beings; and the imitation of Mary is linked with the imitation of Jesus Christ with a view to adapting it more completely to women.

Mary typifies ideal womanhood, and it suffices to read the litanies of the Blessed Virgin to understand what qualities she embodies. Three points especially appear to stand out in relief. First, she is the "Virgin," that is to say, the model of chastity and purity, and all feminine refinements, the mirror of all the graces. Secondly, she is the young mother whom so many artists have pictured holding upon her knees the divine Child. Thirdly, she is the sorrowful mother, the Mother of the Seven Sorrows, capable of consoling all who suffer because she herself has known suffering in all its forms. Thus she is the universal protectress of women.

She is above all the Holy Virgin. The quality which predominates in her, while it covers the entire duration of her life and not only one stage of it, is that of purity: this ideal has been held in honor and set forth as a model since the dawn of Christianity. This ideal has been expressed as the centuries have gone on in a more and more mystical sense in the dogma of the immaculate conception, even to the point of attributing this immaculate conception to the mother of the Virgin, St. Anne. The principle of chastity which is characterized by the Blessed Virgin is clearly opposed to the idea of fecundity which dominates all natural religions, and thus placed Christianity definitely in opposition to the pagan Oriental world of

Tyre or Assyria, with which Judaism was at all times in conflict. Mary stands out in sharp contrast to the Cyprian Aphrodite. We here meet with the two principal ways of looking at life, the conflict between which we have previously commented on: submissive obedience to sensual instincts as personified in the aberrations of the Syriac cults; and the control of these instincts culminating in the cult of virginity.

However, we must not be misunderstood. The cult of the Virgin is very far from sanctioning sterility. For the Virgin honored by the Christian is the Virgin Mother. Catholicism has thus been able while remaining perfectly consistent to constitute itself an ardent and respected champion of large families: it aims chiefly at the preservation of chastity in the marriage relation. It is, on the contrary, the Phœnician religion which leads to sexual perversions and the self-mutilations practiced by the priests of the Great Goddess.

Let us take the litanies: *Mater purissima, castissima, inviolata, intemerata, Rosa mystica, Stella matutina, Regina sine labe originali concepta!* In all these titles whereby theologians have ingeniously honored the Virgin, the same idea constantly recurs. Thousands of verses and hymns have been composed in honor of her who symbolizes the highest ideal of womanhood, the Virgin crushing the serpent under her heel or standing on the crescent of the moon in the starry heavens. The monk who fled into his monastery to escape the alluring seductions of woman finds there tenderness, sweetness, grace and love as incarnated in the Holy Virgin. Through her he quenches his thirst for love which cannot find satisfaction in this life. He engages in a mystical conversation with her in which

his unrealized need of affection is applied to her and spiritualized in his imagination by the interpretation which he gives to the cry of love in the "Song of Songs," which he also thinks of as applying to the Church.

The most pure Virgin becomes the universal sovereign to whom we offer, instead of the crown of roses which served the feudal lord as homage to his lady, the recitation of the rosary.

Mary is also the mother, the young mother. She whom all holy maidens vowed to perpetual celibacy seek to imitate at the same time serves as a model for the Christian wife and mother. In thus becoming entirely human she loses perhaps some of the mystical glory which was attributed to her at the beginning of the Middle Ages; she is made almost too realistic by the domestic qualities which are associated with her in the thought of the fourteenth century as it approaches the Renaissance. Here she sometimes verges on prettiness and even runs the risk of ending in roguishness. But so long as she does not overstep this subtle limit, she remains exquisite in her gracious attitudes of motherhood, "cuddling" her new-born Babe, giving him her breast, holding him on her knees, letting him play with birds and flowers, even taking part in his gambols with the little boy who represents St. John the Baptist.

Then she brings up her Son, in this case a Son who soon dominates his mother with all the authority of a precociously manifested divinity. Nevertheless, she guides him during his early years until the day when he becomes separated from his frightened parents to engage in controversy with the doctors in the Temple.

Finally, the Virgin is above all the consoling mother who follows with halting steps along the way to Calvary, who prostrates herself at the foot of the cross. It is to her that the dying Christ seems to commend all sorrowing humanity when he points to John the beloved disciple and says to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother!" She it is who holds on her knees the bloodless body taken down from the cross, as she formerly held the Holy Child. Finally, she is represented, especially in Spain, with her heart pierced with the seven swords. It may easily seem to all women upon whom have fallen the burdens of life that the Virgin must understand them better than anyone else, since she has suffered before them, and therefore is able to bring them the encouragement of her example, along with her all-powerful intercession with her divine Son, to obtain for them the grace without which frail human nature, at every step of the ascent to Calvary, would be ready to faint.

It is the Virgin as pictured in the old missals who, extending her arms, holds open her enfolding cloak so that under it all humanity may come for shelter. Toward the protecting Virgin in the Middle Ages the totality of men, poor and rich, weak and powerful, under the twofold leadership of the Pope and the Emperor, constantly turned for sympathy and support.

CHAPTER X

DEATH AND THE FUTURE LIFE

PERSONAL DEATH. THE DEATH OF OUR DEAR ONES. THE UNIVERSAL
END. CHRISTIAN ANSWERS. THE FEAR OF THE DEVIL AND HELL.
PRAYER FOR THE DEAD.

The problem of death overshadows the problem of life. This problem presents itself to us under at least three forms: our own personal death, which is relatively easy to undergo; the death of those who are dear to us, which is much harder to bear; and finally, the universal death of humanity, the impending gloom of which hangs like a pall over every thinking being. What is the attitude of Christianity with regard to these problems?

Man knows in advance that he must die; and an instinctive horror, somewhat childish perhaps, seizes him at the thought of leaving his place in the world empty. It is not so much that the moment of death is particularly sad in itself. In most cases it comes and goes almost without our being conscious of it. The illnesses or the injuries which prepare the way for death often cause great suffering; but the sick man generally prefers to endure this suffering rather than to enter into his rest. It is not then the sufferings which terrify him. It is rather the fantastic and melancholy feeling that this world, of which he has always believed himself to be the center, will go on in

precisely the same way after he has left it. A man builds, plants, or sows, but does not reap the fruit of his labors. The sky will still have the same splendor, but he will no longer be there to see it. . . .

This anxiety concerning death which I have just referred to has existed in all times, especially in those periods when man was more refined, had keener foresight and a more vivid imagination, and was therefore less like an animal, which is devoid of foresight except in a confused way. We find this noticeably in Ecclesiastes, as well as in Horace and Marcus Aurelius. Every religion which teaches a more or less spiritual survival offers a solution and a remedy for this problem. Indeed the problem is resolved by the fact that it no longer exists. One does not really die if one continues to live elsewhere, especially if one survives, according to the general belief, in a state that is pleasanter, happier and more complete, although out of sight of the beings on this earth. The consolation supplied by Christianity is in this respect analogous to that of other religions; and I may add that the materialistic faith also solves this problem quite as easily. For one no longer suffers from death if one thinks of it as leading to annihilation. What is there painful in thinking about falling asleep? Whether we regard it as opening the door to a prolonged paradise or to annihilation, personal death ought not to frighten anyone of good sense, provided he is not one of those wretched creatures who believes in hell sufficiently to be afraid of it, but not enough to renounce his vices, in which case he is a person hardly worthy of consideration.

Except for those who fall into this latter category, it is true that we quickly become accustomed to the

idea of death when it touches only ourselves, just as we regard with indifference the 140,000 unknown deaths of each day. We only regret that the empty place which we left in our little circle of intimates will soon be filled. . . . There is, however, a great difference between the resignation of the materialist as he contemplates annihilation and the joy of the Christian in the hope that he is about to realize the divine promise: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Indeed from this restricted point of view alone, religion possesses a distinct advantage over irreligion, which has often proved the most powerful attraction in drawing souls toward the faith. Even though in some cases Christianity is only an opiate for the dying, on what ground would positivists wish to banish it, when their leading aim is precisely to seek happiness and avoid suffering? . . .

"To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise!" He who hears such words with the ear of faith cannot fail to set out upon the formidable journey of death with a tranquillity of mind and serenity of spirit which cannot be attained by those who believe more or less firmly that all ends with death. How can we help preferring a promise of joy to an annihilation without sorrow?

Wherever Christianity has been established it has meant the victory of life over death, the joyful rediscovery of an immortality in which pagans were ceasing to believe, the hope of resurrection.

"Christ triumphs over death!" A favorite subject in the Middle Ages, and one which allured the great artist Delacroix for many years! Assuredly the primary object of religion is to conquer death, to guar-

antee survival to that element of our nature which wishes to live on, or at least the hope or illusion of survival. Without this we can only fold our arms and watch the water flow by. If life were to endure indefinitely, if the universal decay of things around us did not impress us with sadness, we should be less conscious of the burden of the mystery. It is from our pessimism that our religion is born, when it is not a spontaneous flowering of the spiritual life. Thereafter religion makes us optimists, puts us in possession of joy. . . .

What a beautiful symbolic picture is that in the familiar Christian legend: the angel coming to the Virgin to announce her death; her falling asleep which will result in the miraculous assumption toward her divine Son, a triumphant culmination and not a misfortune, a reunion and not a separation! It is impossible to imagine a death which better represents the emergence of a human being into celestial joy: the empty tomb where the astonished Apostles found in place of a corpse an abundance of flowers, and realized that the Virgin had been carried away into radiant space by a company of angels! It is thus that every Christian should imagine death, if he has complete faith. Thereby death ceases to be a sorrow, as it is for the unbelieving who are blessed with but little philosophy; it no longer represents a natural phenomenon to which we are indifferent, and the foreseen end of a temporary state, as it does for the more philosophical materialists; it opens the way into the fulness of joy. . . .

The Christian dies looking forward to a complete resurrection, in which his spiritualized body will be

adorned with youth and beauty. The resurrection of the body is a dogma which has been somewhat neglected of late, but it held an important place in the preoccupations of the primitive Christians. We see signs of this in the pictures, mosaics and bas-reliefs in which the tombs burst open at the call of the angels and allow their temporary prisoners to escape! We see it also in the discussions in early Christian writings concerning the fate of one who has been torn by wild beasts, eaten by the fishes, burned by fire or not buried! These particulars may seem childish and amusing, but nevertheless they were in harmony with the saying of Christ: "I am the life."

Still more than in dealing with the problem of personal death the superiority of Christianity becomes evident when those who are dear to us are snatched from us by death. How immeasurably the grief of the separation is lessened if we feel that it is only for a time and that we have hope of seeing them again! The doctrine of annihilation, we are told, is also not without resources, since the sorrow of separation must cease when he who experiences it enters into nothingness. But I repeat, it is not the same kind of consolation to look forward to forgetfulness in sleep as it is to hope for a joyful reunion.

We here encounter, it is true, under a new form, the objection to which we have already alluded in speaking of the fear of hell; and perhaps it is more serious this time, since it depends on our being good. For we cannot prevent a beloved soul from falling into the gulf of mortal sin, without expiation or pardon at the hour of death. Looking forward to taking this up later, I here merely point out that there is on the contrary a

singular consolation in the sense of being in communion with our own departed friends, even if we imagine them burning in the "flames of purgatory." We know that we may still apply to them our sacrifices, merits or prayers, and that we may still be useful to them, although apparently separated from them by a great gulf. . . .

Nevertheless, this is not in my opinion what makes death for the modern man so terribly serious and provokes among our contemporaries a pessimism with which our ancestors were not obsessed to the same degree. To die ourselves is nothing; to see our loved ones die may be endured by materialists; but for every high-minded person the disastrous and annihilating thought, which takes the joy out of our life like the anticipation of death, is the scientific conception of universal extinction: an extinction which fatally engulfs sooner or later not only the family, but the nation, the race, humanity, all earthly achievements, the earth itself, the solar system, the universe. . . . This is something which the ancients never conceived to the same degree, and when added to a state of irreligion it renders the torture of the modern man intolerable.

What shall we cling to in the presence of this devastating conception if nothing, absolutely nothing, endures? What goal shall we aim for in our efforts, our thoughts, our loves, everything in fact which makes us human? We may be perfectly willing to die, but we find it extremely difficult to accept the notion that we must arrive at the end of life without having had any higher purpose than merely to live; we shrink from the idea of disappearing from the world without

leaving any more trace than an insect which has darted about for a few hours in the trees, or a cow which has browsed for some days in the meadow. We should prefer to have lived for the fulfilment of some eternal purpose, to have contributed to making men more happy, our native land more free, the knowledge of the truth more exact, the attainment of the beautiful more perfect. But if the men whom we serve must themselves also disappear in a few years; if very soon nothing will remain, neither country, science, art, nor humanity; if when our globe shall have accomplished a few more rapid revolutions in the heavens it must grow cold, become extinct and ultimately disappear into the infinite, without anything with which it has ever been occupied being transmitted elsewhere, then what is the use of it all? . . .

This need of acting, of producing, of being useful, of making ourselves survive through our work, is not felt profoundly by everyone; perhaps even the majority of people are free from it, or feel it only vaguely and spasmodically. However, a few people have at least the elementary paternal instinct, which is to be found even among animals as one of the instincts necessary for the preservation of their species. Such people work for their offspring; and this is only under another form working for themselves. They seek to continue themselves in their offspring. They know of course that their children will die in their turn; but that seems far distant, and they do not think of it. By that time these children will have had time to establish other families. If this particular branch dries up another will replace it. . . . The feeling of anguish to which I have referred becomes poignant and gen-

eral only with the more widespread knowledge of history, geology and astronomy. We of to-day are astonished to see a thinker like Renan "discover" tardily that even the earth might die, considering that every day perhaps sees the end of a sun. The torch which Lucretius saw being passed from runner to runner also appears to us never to be extinguished. But for one who has allowed his thoughts to traverse space and time the spectacle of the starlit heavens causes a shudder. . . .

We have had for some time the very slight consolation of thinking that at least matter and force represented permanent principles, eternal in the universe. We no longer dare to-day, even in dealing with such vague entities, to pronounce the word eternity. Scales no longer give us the assurance of unchangeableness, any more than does the thermometer or the hygrometer. Matter has been resolved into force, and force may be dissolved into the intangible expanse of the ether. . . .

Again it may be said that to-day the number of men who are disturbed at the thought that Arcturus or Aldebaran must some day disappear from the celestial vault or that radium may be dissolved into helium is very small. But the repercussion of what is thought by the select few sooner or later, in this case as in all others, reaches the crowd. There are still more who will weep at the thought that a superb monument, a work of art, an admirable creation of human thought may be destined to a very rapid destruction; that in five hundred years there will no longer be an authentic canvas in our galleries, that the ruins of antiquity, as soon as they are exhumed, will fall into dust and that

new fires of Omar will consume our books and manuscripts.

This sentiment becomes particularly keen in such epochs as ours, in which man appears to be returning to his primitive state, that of a destructive ape, and in which the semblance of conventional order under which his brutality for a time has been concealed gives way to such cataclysms of fury as we see in national or civil wars. . . . The Middle Ages, which continued the tradition of the barbarian invasions by a daily succession of pillages, massacres and insurrections, manifested this same tendency in a marked degree, although in a narrower sphere of opportunity. This sort of nihilism then contributed toward the filling of the cloisters which offered a refuge from present fears as well as an asylum for thought. They found there a safety valve in their hopes for the future.

Although eternity eludes us and runs through our fingers like water when we limit ourselves to the material universe, religion enables us to rediscover it in an entirely different domain, whose existence although it is not measurable in meters or kilograms is none the less real. When we wish to discover a prize which we may seek with all our hearts, we must not look for it in the domain of the senses. Any object which our senses can perceive is, like the senses themselves, perishable. Everything which appears materially existent and alive is destined to perish. Let us seek for enduring riches in the realm of the immaterial, the spiritual, the metaphysical, the mystical! It can only be found there. Whatever has a beginning must have an end. To avoid coming to this end we must eschew

such things as have a beginning and attach ourselves rather to the spiritual.

I refrain from pronouncing the word "soul" since so strong an expression we are told is now out of fashion! But let us not make the blunder of confusing our actual thoughts—by whatever name you wish to call them—with the brain or the nerves which serve as their organ. If in the last century this confusion seemed sometimes to constitute progress, nevertheless for many centuries before that humanity agreed that it was a sign of progress to get away from this idea. The spiritual is as real and as capable of proof as the material, although more difficult to perceive. Therefore if any part of us survives, or any part of humanity, our preceding pessimistic conclusion loses its weight. We have rediscovered the lever which failed us, and with this lever a reason for living as well as for facing death. It is enough to know that we are working for the ennobling and perfecting of our eternal character, not only our own individual character, but through the mutual fellowship of all for the progress of the universal soul.

We shall come back later to this idea of fellowship. I shall confine myself here to the assertion that each one of us in attempting to make the most of himself, is working for the good of all. Most of us would even be willing to renounce our individual personalities and be content to be merged in the great All after death, if thereby we could retain at least the possibility of being useful in this present life, and thus contribute to the still unachieved evolution of humanity. Still more would we be willing if, as so many other arguments indicate, the divine presence which acts, thinks

and loves in and through us might thereby retain its identity.

I have said nothing so far which is peculiar to Christianity or which goes beyond the simple confines of spiritual religion. The Christian religion stresses this notion of survival which we have left in the rough, by formulating the conceptions of a last judgment—heaven, purgatory and hell. We may learn by reading Dante how the Middle Ages visualized the “other life” with a realism which the images and pictures of a poet imply. In the Catholic religion as it is ordinarily preached to-day, these conceptions have perhaps lost somewhat, if not their dogmatic importance, at least their practical value; and the moral teaching of the Catechism lays much more emphasis upon the love of God than upon the fear of hell. Nevertheless, I will not conceal the fact that this notion of hell appears to me to be one of the real difficulties of my subject. Those who have no love for the Church criticize with perhaps some justification the function of bugbear attributed to the devil and the sort of blackmail that is levied by the fear of hell. They see therein a relic of the fetishism which debases the mind and, at the same time, causes real suffering to the weak, the dying or those who are afraid that they have lost one who is dear to them through mortal sin. As this difficulty exists, it would be a contemptible method of discussion to ride roughshod over it as if we did not see it. It is much better to present it fully in the first place and to discuss it afterwards.

The idea of hell is not peculiar to Christianity; it existed also among the pagans and in most of the Oriental cults. It is a belief which Christianity holds

in common with the religions of the past. The notion of the devil, although unknown to the ancients, is met with in the Persian and Egyptian religions, where a spirit of evil appears in opposition to the spirit of good. The dualistic explanation which attempts to account for the persistence of injustice, sorrow and death even took on in these religions a completeness which Christian orthodoxy has always denied to it, and which was developed by Christians only in the heresy of Manichaeism. But these pre-Christian ideas interest us only because we find them appearing again in our religion.

It cannot be denied that in former ages, especially when faith was strong, the idea of the last judgment dominated Christian morality. Even now for simple souls it is still true that the strongest reason for believing in a survival is that they imagine a recompense will then be made to them for the inequalities and injustices which are such stumbling blocks on earth, and that eternal justice will be definitely realized. Hell continues to appear in their imaginations as it was represented in the Romanesque portals, with its great scales and book of life containing the record of human actions, devils armed with pitchforks and the burning caldrons or the jaws of monsters swallowing up sinners. It is evidently difficult for people in general to get away from this vividly pictured realism. After all, religion is not addressed to pure spirits who if they existed would be among the elect. It appeals to wretched human creatures, weak as are all creatures. For them there is a logical connection—almost a necessary one—which links the idea of law with that of penalty, and the idea of punishment with that of physical suffering.

A code which did not punish would scarcely ever be obeyed. The immortality of the soul seems to such people necessarily to imply the reëstablishment of a reign of justice analogous to that which they have tried in vain to bring about on earth, with a punishment of crimes which too often here below crop up, in spite of all repression.

What may shock some refined people in this materialization of the last judgment is certainly not what gives offense to the majority of unbelievers. On the contrary, it is just what many men demand of religion. But I suppose that one may without departing from orthodoxy conceive hell as quite other than our old pictures represent it, and eliminate from it the realistic excesses which are intended especially to express to the eyes and the senses the idea of punishment. A Christian knows that there is nothing local or geographical in the employment of the word heaven to denote the abode of happy souls, and in speaking of hell as if it were below the surface of the earth according to the ancient pagan terms, above and below. Likewise the pain of hell may be regarded simply as being separated from God after having acquired at the moment of death the full knowledge of what this may mean.

I might even be tempted to go still further—but here I am departing from orthodoxy—and assume that the souls who have been found to be unworthy of life and undeserving of a share in the divine blessings will lapse into nothingness, like the beasts whom they have preferred to resemble. In that case their punishment would be that of a work that is a failure, which the divine Sculptor throws aside. This is the path that is followed by Buddhism, which has invented a refashion-

ing of wicked souls, a reincarnation in bodies the baseness of which corresponds to the condition of the souls, until the time when they shall show themselves worthy of mounting higher. . . .

What part then does the devil play? It would seem that since the days of Judaism his importance has been gradually lessened in popular belief. The Jews regarded space as peopled with invisible spirits, some good and some bad, superior to humanity in power and mediators between man and God. According to this Hebrew notion, the demons are fallen angels, and the sin which caused the fall of Satan the gravest of all, because it engendered all other sins. It was the sin of pride whereby a created being claimed to be equal to his Creator and declared himself to be beyond his laws. Satan committed the same sin as Adam, only it was aggravated by the fact that he realized in advance the complete horror of it. He dared to compare himself with God. Stunned by his fall from heaven he became the incarnation of all the powers of evil. We see him in the book of Job appearing before Jehovah as a sort of demon of perversity, a wicked god attempting to dispute with the good God lordship over unfortunate humanity. It was thus that the Middle Ages regarded him and that many people have continued ever since to think of him. Medieval theologians attributed to him a power over matter which they supposed enabled him to oppose the false miracles of sorcerers to the true miracles of God. . . .

To-day Catholicism seems to have degraded the devil to the role of a tempter such as he played in the Gospel narrative, which tells us how Jesus during his forty days fast in the wilderness, in order that he

might become in all respects like men, permitted himself for a moment to listen to his insidious proposals. Therefore we may regard him as the personification of the beast, the animal instincts, against which our human will is compelled to struggle with an ever-increasing intensity. That is why he has been likened to the Faun, the god Pan, who symbolized in the ancient world the same animal and sensual instincts. Those enemies of Christianity who urge upon us the "return to nature" are really serving the hairy god with the cloven hoof and the horns of a goat. . . .

The *Imitation* speaks somewhere of the "ancient enemy," which is of course the devil. But for an evolutionist it would be synonymous with our whole past. The devil then would be identified with original sin, which proceeds from him. The general idea of evolution, which seems so natural when we confine ourselves to the study of bones and skulls, does not in any respect contradict, as I have already remarked, spiritual religion, theism or Christianity—on condition of course that we do not regard this evolution as a sort of spontaneous generation inherent in matter. It is only, if we may say so, a way of describing creation which is slightly different from that which our fathers conceived and is shocking to old habits of thought, but it is not in conflict with any vital principle of religion. A hypothesis which is absolutely unproved, and doubtless unprovable—Darwinism, or rather Lamarckianism—does not entrench upon religion any more than does physical science as a whole. They may be compared to two parallel tunnels which are without communication with each other and by means of which we travel through life. It matters little whether we consider

our "ancient enemy," from whom we are descended, to be the gorilla or the devil. The important and miraculous fact, which can only be explained as the result of divine intervention, is that this gorilla has been able to become a man: that inert matter, or the primitive ape from which this gorilla himself is said to have come, has as the result of God's breathing into his nostrils the breath of life learned to will and to think. It is there predominantly that we behold the irremediable defeat of the devil, of that lower principle of life which tended to hold us indefinitely in bondage under the shackles of inertia as a mere part of the other material elements of the great cosmos, and which still attempts constantly to drag us back and bury us forever. . . .

But let us say no more about the devil and hell, and turn our thoughts rather to the joys of the elect, to heaven, as it is naïvely pictured in the old mosaics, with the throngs of saints in white robes and with palms in their hands, worshiping the celestial Lamb, amid the triumphant hosts of the redeemed around the throne of God, where Jesus eternally crowns Mary!

Or, to be more precise, let us put aside all representations of the future life, since we have no means of conceiving what takes place there except under the form of symbols which are borrowed from our earthly life, and are therefore necessarily materialistic! In that case, another question presents itself, the question to which we have frequently alluded from the first: whether the notion of a future life and of a judgment after death, under whatever form it may be

represented, brings comfort to humanity or only one more futile source of fear.

We may look at this question from two points of view: with reference to ourselves, or with reference to those whom we have loved and lost.

So far as we are concerned we may well tremble at the idea of death, followed as it is by this supreme moment of judgment; and it is quite possible that some criminals, as they entered upon their last moments, may have been obsessed and tortured by their fear of hell. A few timorous souls, scrupulous to a degree, may have felt similar anguish. It has even happened that weak minds, predisposed to mental unbalance, have found in their fear of the devil an excuse for continuing in their folly. Nevertheless, for the normal mind the answer in this case is simple enough. Those who have sought to live conscientiously do not so much experience anxiety as they are thrilled with hope when they think of the glorious promises of God. In spite of their unworthiness, they approach death with a smile on their lips, as did the martyrs in the old Roman amphitheaters; and the thought of a future life fills them with consolation as they undertake the dread journey. Doubtless even the righteous man knows well that he has often fallen into sin. But the Church teaches that the merciful pardon of the Savior is infinitely easy to obtain. Over and over again the Gospel, as well as the tradition which interprets it, recurs to this same idea. When we tremble for our own sins it is enough if we are sorry for them with a firm purpose of not falling into them again, for that enables us to be absolved, even though it were at the last moment of life. The remedy is so

easy that from the side of our opponents some people have professed to be scandalized by its very facility, as if it were a reward for tardy repentance. Indeed the suffering caused by remorse has been known to exist outside of Christianity, and surely no one will regret that it is sometimes felt by the wicked and leads them to forsake their sins.

But we may look at the question in another way. Some hearts are so full of love and tenderness that they are sure to be tortured by the fear that their dear departed ones have been cast into hell; they are troubled by the thought that if they themselves attain to the heavenly reward they will be eternally separated from those whom they have loved. It is equally true that for materialists this separation would be final, but believing in annihilation they would experience neither a sense of separation nor grief. But those who believe in the survival of souls must believe at the same time in the eternal duration of such grief.

I would say in the first place that this suffering, for the Christian, can exist only in advance, because of the imperfect foresight of our earthly life. After death, all sorrows of human origin will be eliminated amid celestial joys through acquiescence in the divine will.

And even for the little time that this fear may be felt on earth, it is not for the believer what the unbeliever imagines. For the believer knows that he may pray efficaciously for his departed friends and that he may direct toward them his own merits and his penitence. However guilty may have been the one whom he laments, he has a right to feel confidence in his own efforts and in the divine mercy.

People have often complained of the abuses which have been associated with these prayers for the departed and the dubious commercial transactions to which they may have given occasion. But what a marvelous consolation for those who remain on earth to imagine that they may still be useful to those whom they mourn! Is there anything more painful than to feel ourselves helpless and powerless by the bedside of a dying man? How eagerly one snatches at the possibility of rendering him any service, of lightening his burden, be it even by taking him to task! It is perhaps the chief value of all the medicines which we must administer regularly from hour to hour that they furnish relief, not so much to the sick man, as to those around him. In the same way, our prayers for the dead mitigate this sensation of emptiness, of irremediable separation, which is the most painful aspect of death. In praying for sinners, even though they may be forever condemned, one still may feel that he is attempting to minister to their necessities.

PART IV

CHRISTIANITY IN THE LIFE OF SOCIETY

CHAPTER XI

RELATIONS OF MEN WITH EACH OTHER

THE LAW OF LOVE AND SOCIALISM. THE COMMUNION OF THE FAITHFUL AND PACIFISM. THE VALUE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY. THE CLERGY AND POLITICS.

In the preceding chapters we have considered Christianity only as a solution of our metaphysical problems, a method of worshipping God, and as the controlling principle of our individual and family life. We shall now consider it in a broader sense as indirectly influencing the social relations of men with each other: in other words, we shall consider it as a solidifying social force inspired by universal charity and constituting a foundation of public morality.

To the end that they may live in comparative peace or at least restrain and minimize their differences, men have devised a certain number of conventions whose object is to regulate by law their reciprocal relations and to determine by a "social contract" the attitude of individuals toward the authority which is to direct, coördinate and govern them. It is "agreed" to respect these laws and this contract until the time when they require modification. This agreement is a fiction similar to that which regulates in social life the customs of men ordinarily called gentlemen—the manner in which they cut their bread or handle their knives and forks, the color of the gloves they wear, the formula

by which they end their letters. These are in the proper sense of the word conventions or conveniences.

As these conventions cannot be to everyone's taste, it has been likewise implicitly agreed that the will of the majority shall be imposed on the minority, if necessary by force, and that this minority shall be obliged to respect the laws imposed by the greater number as the expression of the general will, even though it may result in inconvenience or injury to them. This applies to the penal laws as well as to the political. The same legislative power forbids some to commit murder and others to nurse the sick or to instruct children in a religious garb, and regards them all as similarly if not equally criminal if they overstep these restrictions.

Christianity, which regulates the relations of men with each other, is in some respects much more exacting than the law; for it commands that which no law has ever attempted, that we love all men as brothers. But the principles which it sets forth are not alterable by human legislation and do not depend on a changing majority. Coming from God himself, they are as immutable as he is. They do not receive their sanction from this world unless they happen to coincide with human laws. They may not seem burdensome to those who are not of the faith, since their jurisdiction is limited to the domain of conscience. Their authority is more compelling in the eyes of the believer, since instead of being promulgated by men, the Christian moral law proceeds from God and the penalties which it imposes may extend into eternity.

I have already touched upon this question in speaking of duty and of individual morality. The require-

ments of social morality which, in Christianity, are found to be in accord with the civil law are those which already existed in the Mosaic law and are common to almost all times and countries. They consist in respecting the life and property of one's neighbor: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." These are conventions so necessary and simple that humanity respects them, except when a group of any size or importance finds it advantageous to isolate itself in a state of brigandage, or in warfare, or in a socialistic régime, or a reign of terror. We are not here considering such special circumstances. But Christ went further and commanded men to love one another for the sake of God, in God and for God, when he preached to them the divine law of charity. This is one of the points in which the superiority of Christianity is most evident. The teaching of Jesus may be summed up in this law of love, of peace and humility: "Love one another." . . . "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." . . . "Be not envious." . . . "Do not say to your brother Raca." . . . "Forgive those who trespass against you." . . . "Return good for evil." . . . "If anyone strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." . . . "Put up thy sword within its sheath." . . . "Do not despise the Samaritan or the publican." . . . "Take always the lowest place." . . . "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." . . .

We may suppress all the rest of Christian teaching and keep only this, and it still would be true that the preaching of Christ would produce a most profound moral revolution, such as has never taken place among men. He spoke such words as had never been heard

in the pagan world; his injunctions were obeyed; and millions of men became his disciples, although he offered them neither riches nor power nor pleasures, but voluntary poverty, chastity, outrages and martyrdom. The more they were persecuted, the more numerous they became, until one day they conquered the world! . . .

It may indeed be true that, since Christianity has become superficially the religion of our old Western world, many have passed for Christians who were so only in name. But who, searching the depths of his heart, would dare call himself completely Christian? The old evil instincts of humanity are not eliminated in a day or two by the mechanical recitation of certain formulae or the performance of prescribed ritual acts. Some so-called Christians who were fond of invoking before their massacres their "old national God" certainly have had a strange conception of this national God! Only yesterday a people who pretended to believe in Jesus Christ subjected the world to a most frightful war in the hope of enriching its commerce and industry. Beneath its millions of shells aimed at the belfries and towers of cathedrals, which profaned and shattered crucifixes and sacrificed regiments like herds of animals, we shall look in vain for the pure doctrine of the Gospel. In place of this parody on Christianity imagine a Europe in which all men practiced the Christian doctrine after the manner of a St. Francis of Assisi or a St. Vincent de Paul, and compare it with the present pitiable state of humanity!

An analogous ideal has been advanced in our day under the name of Socialism. Its advocates talk a good deal in their official utterances of human soli-

darity. They establish leagues and communist "internationales" in which they at times almost appear to believe. They invent constitutions whose aim is to suppress human inequalities. But the most chimerical, even the most laudable of these political attempts are based on the oppression of minorities and sow the seeds of revolt. They speak to the ruling classes of the day only of their rights; Christianity tells them of their duties.

The realization of the Socialistic commonwealth, in so far as such a thing is possible, as I have already remarked, is the monastic state, which possesses all the individual advantages and economic defects of Socialism. The monastery is a voluntary and partial application of Socialism instead of being a compulsory and universal application of it, such as would come through an expropriation of property. Here is the fundamental difference between the Utopias with which they attempt to beguile the poor in this new religion of communism and the Christian religion. From Christianity the communists have borrowed the texts which favor the poor and the disinherited; but at the same time they deprive them of their value and merit by imposing them arbitrarily by force, thus destroying the most valuable element in them, which is freedom.

Christianity invites the rich to despoil themselves in favor of the poor; Socialism invites the poor to despoil the rich. There is a slight difference here.

Jesus Christ urged charity upon the rich, appealing to their generosity; he asked of the poor only that they be grateful for this goodness. To-day we are told that the poor no longer wish charity as it is humiliating to

them. What they are working for now is to exploit the industrious for the benefit of the idle, incompetent, unintelligent and vicious, who have not been able, or have not known how to lay up an inheritance by continued effort and by the economy of one or more generations. While attempting to bring about this unrealizable transformation, which can only result in the creation of a new rich class, they instill in the poor hatred of the rich whom they proclaim as their oppressors, and in the rich hatred of the poor whom they make to appear as the future exploiters of the rich. Except for the politicians, always eager to fish in troubled waters, who would dare to maintain that this is progress?

Christianity, on the other hand, has realized this human solidarity of which its enemies prate so vainly in the most complete and extensive way, by the love of all men in God. It brings about the redemption of all by the sacrifice of each. It has given to individuals freedom by making it possible for them to unite together voluntarily. It has given a social status and a hope to the humblest, the most unfortunate and enslaved. Christianity does not declare that all men are equal in material advantages, which would be absurd, but that they are all called to the same heavenly glory. According to the Christian view, they are distinguished from each other, not by birth, fortune, or knowledge, but by virtue; and this virtue could not exist in the righteous unless it were combined with compassion, even for the wicked and the criminal, which leads one to minister to them in every way and make them happy. All men are brothers; and their fraternity is inherent, not in their bodily or material

substance, or in their instincts, which are so plainly in conflict with each other, but in the spiritual element in their nature. It is by virtue of their common redemption through the Blood of Jesus Christ that they are bound together.

Marvelous bond of union, which not only holds together all classes of men, but at the same time embraces all the centuries! It builds together in one fellowship all the living and all the faithful departed, as well as all those who are yet unborn; and this fellowship will endure until the day when all men disappear from the earth, the day of the last judgment!

In this one communion and fellowship which knits together the spiritual and immortal elements in all created beings God constitutes the bond which keeps them indissolubly united. Under the divine authority they are ranged in successive orders: the Church Triumphant, comprising the saints and the blessed angels in heaven; the Church Militant, composed of those who are still fighting on earth; and the Church Expectant, made up of those who have not yet attained to heaven, but are awaiting the divine mercy in purgatory.

The saints in heaven intercede in heaven for those living on earth and for those who are suffering in purgatory. The living, in their turn, may by their prayers, sacrifices and devotion contribute something to the salvation of their neighbors and the redemption of those who are being punished for their sins. Thus there need be no vain or unjust suffering, since all merit is cumulative and makes up a total sum which may be applied to the universal happiness.

It has been truly said that humanity is composed

of the dead much more than of the living. We moderns have an unfortunate tendency to forget the dead. Unless the dead are still useful to us and can be exploited for the furtherance of ambitions which are only too much alive, we allow them quickly to sink into oblivion. Under the pretext of being up to date and forward-looking, we repudiate the past. The Church has a longer memory. She commemorates those whose virtues made them resplendent, in order that we may emulate their examples and invoke their prayers; but she recalls also the feebler souls who yielded at times to temptation and almost succumbed in the struggle, and continues to pray for them. Christian thought embraces all those who had, have or will have the same faith!

The Christian Church thus stands for a unity which traverses the ages, as well as a unity which transcends space. In these days of horrible warfare, in which the nations, instead of becoming more united, seem to be drifting further apart; in which the pacifism of an older time would now appear suicidal for any nation which might tolerate it; in which all our dreams of future happiness are now being obliterated in the chaos of civil strife and international warfare, Christianity, if it could really be practiced, would be the one bond which could hold the nations together in a lasting union and give them assurance of a just peace, based on respect for all liberties and all rights. It is an impressive experience for a Catholic to attend church on a Sunday in a country far removed from his home, foreign and perhaps even hostile to his own, and hear there the same prayers which he would hear at the same moment in the church of his native land,

take part in the same ceremonies, meet his God on the same kind of an altar and under the same mystical representation, worship him in the same language, and thereby find himself intimately associated in thought and spirit with unknown men who but a moment ago were strangers to him!

Christianity is peculiar in being at the same time international, through the vast fellowship which it establishes among its followers everywhere in the world, and yet national, through the persistence in the same place of its very ancient sanctuaries—in France the most ancient of our monuments, in which for more than a thousand years the souls of our ancestors have crystalized. It preaches the universal love of humanity, but it proclaims as a primary duty the love of our own country. It has been reproached for being ultramontane and obeying the orders of a foreigner. Its priests also have been accused of chauvinistic militarism. These two charges put side by side nullify each other.

The Christian Church certainly does not love war; it cannot sanction or tolerate this monstrous state of affairs in which man becomes a wolf toward his fellow-man, and Christians tear each other with teeth and claws like wild beasts. But it does teach us that we should recognize, cherish and protect certain human groups radiating from us in ever-widening circles: first, the family; then the little band of people comprising the parish or the village; then the nation, which has now become vaster than antiquity ever imagined; then the fatherland of an entire continent, which stands in our mind for a common tradition of culture; and finally, humanity. The Church lays upon Christians the obligation to work for the welfare and stability of

each of these groups. This obligation does not mean that we should hate or attack neighboring groups or nations (for all hatred is sinful), but that we should be willing to sacrifice our own interests, our pleasure and even our lives, for the community. Self-defense is a legitimate right which belongs to every community when attacked; and that implies that every member of the community must be ready to sacrifice himself courageously for its safety. During the Great War Roman Catholic priests went out to bring in the wounded under fire of the Germans; and they even felt that they were entirely orthodox in shouldering arms in the trenches when their superiors ordered them to do so.

To sum up the teaching of the Christian Church, we may say that it imposes upon every man discipline, humility, devotion and love. Surely we need not ask any more of it than that, or try to dragoon it under the standards of a political party! If we did, it could only answer us in the words of Jesus Christ: "My kingdom is not of this world." Without attacking any government, it has the right to insist on the respect of all governments; just as every nation may claim the advantage of relying upon the Church as an element of stability, order and peace. I will soon touch briefly upon the political relations of the Church, which are not really a part of my subject. The chief value of the Christian religion is that it gives a higher aim to the life of men by placing the object of their desires outside of and above humanity. It is not concerned with the satisfaction of their temporal interests, but with the accomplishment of the eternal purposes of God.

Christianity supplies a solid moral foundation for

these notions of conscience, duty, renunciation and sacrifice, which alone can guarantee a calm and peaceful, and therefore happy, social order. A society cannot continue long without altruism; and altruism without the support of religion will soon vanish. If all ends with death and our only aim is to attain happiness in this world, it is too evidently a sophistry, borrowed from a religious tradition no longer popular, or at least from a despised spirituality, to ask any man to sacrifice his pleasure, and even his life, under the pretext that he will thus insure the happiness of a future community. Of what importance to him is a community whose happiness shall be attained only after his annihilation? A morality without God can have only two foundations, both of which are based on the unjustifiable restraint of one's neighbor—fear of the police or human respect.

But, we are told, religion is not necessary in order to impose respect for law. He who accepts the advantages of community life must also pay the legal charges! "I must? But why? Upon what spiritual fiction, upon what case of conscience, do you base such a duty? Have I ever signed your social contract? Even if I should sign it, how could my signature be binding upon me, a materialist, if it were to my advantage to ignore it? That is mere mysticism, superstition, religiosity, deceit!" Your "morality without God" is an atavistic survival from theists of the past. It will not bear close examination, and like the teaching called "secularism" has contributed much toward the degradation of reason. We have witnessed during a half century of anti-clericalism the rapid disappearance of all social as well as individual morality. The

general advantages of religion as supplying the foundation for laws and conventions have long been recognized; and I need not take the trouble to insist upon it. How many countries since ancient Rome have had and still have a "state religion," by virtue of which what might have been merely the arbitrary requirements of human statutes have become binding on the conscience! This argument for an established religion has become so widely accepted that, on the contrary, it has been urged against such a religion that it is simply a machine for keeping up the government. Religions are to morality what postulates, axioms and self-evident truths are to the solid edifice of a scientific theory.

From this point of view, the advantage of religion is that it serves the community without doing violence to individuals. These individuals are submitting to a human ordinance against which they might easily feel inclined to revolt, but they are convinced that in thus sacrificing themselves for the general welfare they are obeying a law which is excellent and moreover divine. They are ennobling themselves in this present life and laying up an eternal treasure in the future. This reward, had it no other reality than in their hope—and this ennobling of their lives, were it only imaginary—would nevertheless have brought them, in exchange for their renunciation, a joy far surpassing those which they had renounced. The curse of modern states, which keeps them constantly exposed to anarchy and war, is the dogma that they are founded only on the Cartesian notion of reason. It ought to be plain that reason is incapable of building up a morality, just as it is of supplying any sort of a metaphysical solution. It can only, for each individual, subject everything to

doubt. The Christian, on the other hand, knows without any preliminary discussion how he ought to act and why. He has discovered an aim for his life, a useful direction for his efforts, a purpose in his sufferings, a compensation for his sacrifices and sorrows. In accepting what his self-regarding instinct might have considered suffering he attains complete interior peace. He himself is enjoying a present and immediate happiness, because he believes that he is happy; and happiness can be defined only in terms intelligible to the one interested. Our happiness is real when we believe that we experience it. Furthermore, it is upon this same principle that the Socialist or Communist religion proceeds when it imposes upon the more convinced and confident of its followers a frightful discipline, and takes from them part of their salaries to prepare a paradise for the society of the future. But this sort of mysticism soon begins to be avaricious, bitter and aggressive.

The heart of society is the family, and nowhere more than in the constitution of the family does religion demonstrate its social value. This pragmatic side of our subject is so obvious and has been so often treated that it is enough here simply to mention it. We have already seen how the Christian looks at marriage and the duties which result from it for him. I shall here confine myself to adding a few words on the social effects of this spiritual union of one man and one woman.

Marriage without religion is only a pairing or a contract. It may be entered into for a short time and dissolved at will; and therefore it gives no sense of security to the man or the woman, and no material or

moral support to the children. They are merely the fruits of instinct, chance, or self-interest; they have nothing to expect from their parents, and acknowledge no duties toward them. Their one precarious resource to help them through their early years must be therefore the support of the nation, just as their parents, old and infirm, will become a charge on the state in their last days. They take each other, they leave each other; and each one "lives his own life," trying only as far as possible to live at the expense of the other. It is the logical consequence of the "struggle for life," which under the high-sounding name of solidarity, tends to become operative from top to bottom in all human groups, in proportion as they "gain their freedom."

Christian marriage unites the man and the woman for life, in joy or in sorrow; it makes them one in order that they may increase and multiply their kind. The family becomes a trinity, the apex of which is the child. The parents owe the child help and example; the child owes its parents obedience and respect. The Christian family is united and numerous; its members lean upon each other for mutual support and thus furnish a solid foundation for the nation. During the fifty years in which there has been an official attempt to de-Christianize France, the results are sufficiently clear to be evident to all who do not obstinately refuse to use their eyes. Easy divorce, legal marriage without Christian faith, children withdrawn from parental influence, even the gradual suppression of the rights of inheritance, have little by little corroded and dissolved the old family life and resulted in a de-

population which will leave us more and more at the mercy of our enemies.

I finally reach in conclusion a question the importance of which we must not underestimate in its bearing on religious ideas; and yet it ought not to be raised. I mean the political question. The relations of religion with politics would be extremely simple if both sides did not at times overstep their proper boundaries. Jesus Christ, who strongly rebuked the Pharisees and the money-changers in the Temple, was careful to distinguish the Church from the state: "Render," he said, "to Caesar the things that are Caesar's"; that is to say: "Respect the government and laws of your country"; and he added (as a principle which if applied might stabilize all earthly governments): "My kingdom is not of this world." Here, as with every utterance of Christ, there is nothing to be changed or added.

The Church is willing to tolerate all the varieties of social order which men have from time to time adopted, abandoned, cursed and then readopted. She remains ready to welcome every new form which they may invent. In her political relationships the Church is primarily interested in seeing that religion receives fair treatment; and her only preference, as is only natural, is for those governments which defend or tolerate religion rather than for those which persecute it. Every government that has become regular receives from the start the support of the Church, since it represents law and order; it is to the material interest of this government to show favors in return for this valuable support. The Church does not admit that she has any necessary connection with monarchy, oligarchy or democracy, although if we go back to the

primitive days of the Church it would seem indeed that the Christian community was at the start a sort of republic.

It is not thus, however, as we all know, that things work out in practice; and since politics plays an indisputable part in the religious or anti-religious attitude of our contemporaries, we must face the facts. The Church formerly claimed the right to exercise temporal as well as spiritual authority. Possessing the revealed truth of God, she considered it logical that everything, even in the temporal order, should be subordinated to that "truth." She regarded the world as a vast monastery in which men have only one practical aim to pursue, namely, to merit heaven. To-day the state actually seeks to banish the Church from her own spiritual sphere, on the ground that Catholic teaching is not always in conformity with the truth proclaimed by the cardinals of the Sorbonne, or revealed by the lay teachers of the primary schools. . . .

But another order of ideas has been gradually introduced into the world, in proportion as it has become clear how infinite the universe is, and how much diversity men display in their equal claim to be superior to their neighbors, namely, that the faith is and ought to remain an individual matter, that no one has the right forcibly to apply to another's illness the remedies which he imagines have cured him. We may impose lessons in arithmetic or geometry on every ignorant person, because the theorems of mathematics are restricted within logical and rigorous limits and there has been a general acceptance of its necessary postulates. But we have no right to make the same pretensions when it is a question of metaphysical truth,

because our daily experience proves to us how often these postulates may be contradicted. We may exhibit what we consider to be a kind of light, but we must not bring the torch near enough to burn our critics! . . . Indeed that was the teaching of Christ when he defended the Samaritans against the attacks of the Pharisees. Men who are thoroughly convinced are generally little disposed to such tolerance. But we must to-day regard it as a social necessity. Society can continue only if men agree, in their relations with one another, to avoid as far as possible the subjects upon which they find themselves in such violent disagreement.

Unfortunately, minorities always understand this better than majorities. To-day the majority in France is, in spite of illusions cherished by some enthusiasts, temporarily but fundamentally anti-clerical. Anti-clericalism is indeed the only common ground upon which we can occasionally succeed in building up a majority in our country. Our governments, whenever they find themselves menaced, can easily make use of this convenient issue in order to regain the support of parliament or of the public. We have been living for at least a century and a half in a state of religious war; and the fatal consequence has been that it has caused the clergy to assume an attitude absolutely contrary to what men of their spirit should assume. Christianity is essentially the religion of the poor, the weak, the disinherited. The politicians have violently alienated from it all these poor people whom it was quite easy for them to influence, and against whom official pressure could readily be brought. At the same time they have forced the clergy, whose property they have

confiscated, to fall back upon the rich, whose help was necessary to keep them alive and who alone were disposed to assist them. The clergy thus found themselves turned away from the democratic social path which was natural to them, and many people have therefore come to believe that Christianity, contrary to all its traditions, has become a reactionary religion.

In bringing about this state of things and this distortion of the popular view, no one, I suppose, would seriously maintain that real freedom of thought has been a predominant factor. To-day, as always, the majority of men believe what they are told to believe, or what they suppose it will be for their present interests to believe; the number of those who rely on their reason is infinitesimal. These latter, in all ages and under all régimes, have always been free to think as they liked, if not always to express their thoughts. The preceding observation applies quite as much to the bourgeoisie, who after having been Voltairian at the beginning of the nineteenth century to-day find it convenient to espouse the cause of the Church, as to the people for whom it is no longer "the fashion" to go to church. Among those who shout, "Down with the priests," there are very few who have been alienated by difficulties relating to the mystery of the Trinity or the Divinity of Christ; but there are many who are doing all in their power to suppress the influence of the clergy in order that they may have greater opportunity for the satisfaction of their evil desires to exploit the rich for their own profit!

But these things have to do with politics; and I cannot think that the remedy for this distressing situation lies in embroiling the clergy still more in political

partisanship, or even in giving them, as certain ardent Catholics have proposed, a powerful weapon through the championship of a Christian Socialism or a state Socialism, in order that they may regain the popular favor. Here we depart entirely from metaphysics and enter the domain of material interests; but from a practical point of view all Socialism, whether state or Christian, seems to me destructive of initiative and consequently harmful to society, which ought to be a hive of industry. Never did Christ say to Caesar: "Take for yourself and your functionaries the goods of the rich, together with the small savings of the poor, and dissipate them in smoke, under pretext of sharing them among yourselves." There will always be rich and poor, in a Bolshevist country more than anywhere else. No kind of "assurance" will obviate shameful misfortunes. In the social domain the role of the Church is simple and clearly marked: it is to preach charity. The less the Church occupies herself with temporal interests and politics, for whatever cause, the more she will enter into the spirit of her Master, and the more she will tend to establish the peace of God. This laudable end appears to be well-nigh attained in our country; and the anti-Christians have no longer any plausible reason for continuing their useless and unequal hostilities against the Church.

CHAPTER XII

THE PLACE OF ORNAMENTS AND CEREMONIES IN CATHOLICISM

CHRISTIAN ART. SYMBOLISM AND MYSTICISM.

I propose to examine in this last chapter certain questions which are of secondary importance in comparison with the graver questions which we have thus far studied. Ought religion to have recourse to art or poetry in order to reach the minds of the faithful? What influence is Christian art capable of exerting, and what are the characteristics peculiar to this art?

These questions are certainly secondary considering the fundamental importance of the problems relating to God, the soul or eternity. And I would seem to be lingering in a romanticism quite out of fashion if, as an important argument for Christianity, I appealed to the impression which the Gothic cathedrals may produce; or, on a somewhat lower aesthetic plane, our old country churches; or to the sentimental emotion which the combination of music, chants, sacred rites and so many voices joining in the same prayer may awaken in a heart disposed to piety.

I do not know, however, whether the utilitarianism of a Bentham would so studiously ignore what is undeniably a source of joy, happiness, nobility and moral purification to so many souls. And when I look at the question from a higher standpoint, I ask myself why

we should be ordered to sacrifice to Truth alone the two other elements of the classical trilogy, Beauty and Goodness. Truth, we are told, need not be either beautiful or good; it is enough that it be true—that is its own beauty and goodness. The objection may be well taken when it is a question of demonstrating the theorem of the square of the hypotenuse, or of finding out at what angle for shooting it is necessary to point a cannon of 420. But in this case we go further. We are approaching the divine Absolute, toward whom three roads lead us, all converging toward the same summit; and this summit, which is inaccessible from all sides, we have a right to look at from many points of view in order that we may the more clearly perceive it.

I have already shown, in speaking of morals, how the supreme goodness of Christianity adds its weight of sentiment to the balance which the hesitations of our reason might have left in equilibrium. The argument from beauty is of the same order. The absolute truth cannot be conceived as distinct from beauty, or the absolute beauty as devoid of truth. When we try to represent to ourselves the true in all its splendor, the impression of beauty may then help us to realize that we are nearing our goal. Our means of appreciating the one and the other are the same. In both cases, the mind cannot dispense with the instrumentality of the senses. Reason explains to us what our eyes see, our ears hear and our hands touch. Beauty, by procuring for these same organs of comprehension a superior satisfaction, produces in our souls a moral impression of grandeur, harmony, equilibrium and peace. . . .

Why then should religion repudiate any means of expression which may be quite as useful and almost as indispensable as the spoken word in making itself understood? Assuredly, if man were a pure spirit, if a new process of evolution had led him to float invisibly and intangibly in space, if he were deprived of his body and his senses, if the divine Word could communicate itself to him without passing through the medium of words, religious practice itself might well become more refined and more purely spiritual. But man being what he is, why should he refuse to employ every possible means to help him apprehend the divine?

The abuses and the dangers of these artistic aids to religion are well known, namely, paganism, idolatry. It is to avoid even the appearance of them that Mohammedanism has forbidden, in its mosques, the use of human or animal figures; that Protestantism has sought to eliminate from its places of worship, as far as may be in accordance with its own principles, all sculpture, music or ceremony. Catholicism has not taken the same path, and it has been reproached for not doing so. Possibly the form which it has taken since the sixteenth century, in southern countries, has sometimes been open to such criticism; but this criticism cannot touch true Christian art, which in its higher manifestations is more ancient.

What new element then has Christianity added to this conception of beauty? This beauty did not originate with Christianity. The pagan gods also had their radiant splendor, and masterpieces of art were accumulated in their temples. A religion, whatever it may be, easily attains to grandeur and majesty. It

would be necessary to have but limited spiritual faculties and to be a very mediocre artist indeed in order not to find better and greater means of representing God, or of conveying the idea of eternity and the infinite, than by drawing pictures of pipe smokers or of peasants carrying pails of milk. But to the representation of the purely material forms which it shares with pagan art, Christian art has added the new spiritual leaven, introduced by it in all sorts of ways into the world. That this is artistically a progress has been disputed, just as it has been asserted that a purely sensual life is superior to an existence which is regenerate, but troubled by terrors of conscience. To the paradoxical mind of a Nietzsche Christianity would be quite incompatible with the idea of art. It is the perpetual controversy which we have noted throughout this book, between the apostles of "nature," with their passivity, and the partisans of effort, with their active resistance. This contrast appears if we compare the placid statues of the Olympian Jupiter or of Pallas Athene with the symbolical frescoes of Fra Angelico in the Convent of St. Mark in Florence. We maintain that Christianity, without sacrificing anything of the beauty of form, has produced through its art a spiritual and moral satisfaction which pagan art was incapable of producing. That is a commonplace of literature; but it has not been demonstrated, whatever many artists may think, that art must be limited to technique and that it is any the better for being stupid.

Let it be well understood that I am not speaking here of the pagan artists of the Italian Renaissance, who were content to represent Christian scenes without trying to depict anything more than noble attitudes,

sumptuous colors and elegant draperies. True Christian art ended before the sixteenth century and has only manifested itself since then in survivals and accidental resurrections.

One of the most marked and distinctive characteristics of this purely Christian art is, as I have said,¹ its constant use of symbolism. In that way it speaks much more to the mind than to the eyes. Its images, paintings, mosaics, statues, bas-reliefs do not tell only what they seem to tell, but they suggest above all something more mysterious which the artists had in their minds and which the spectator cannot help finding in their work. The religious sentiment, we have seen from the beginning, is the explanation of everything in the universe that is mysterious, dark, unknowable and incomprehensible. All the "progress of science" does not eliminate and never can eliminate these unexplored domains into which the mind ventures only in imagination, and in which it cannot hope to interpret or translate the vague truths encountered there except by means of comparison, image or symbol. That is the proper function of Christian art: to express the hidden thought, to realize the ideal, to make the abstract concrete.

Neither this art, nor the Church herself in which it moves and has its being, is best understood when bathed in light, flooded with the brightness of the sun, as a school or factory should be. They require mystery and shadow. Realism may find its place even in Christian art; but then it is for the purpose of bringing God and his saints nearer to our humanity in order that

¹ Pp. 122-23.

we may have their virtues or their sufferings before us as models which we try to imitate. We have proceeded along this road since the Renaissance. We have accentuated more and more such a tendency, in proportion as religion has seemed gradually to abandon metaphysical solutions and to confine itself to the realm of edification and morality. In the fifth century they would never have painted on the breast of Christ the Sacred Heart with its arteries clumsily and realistically portrayed.

From its beginnings on the contrary, Christian art has had recourse to symbol and has voluntarily expressed itself through images and hieroglyphics. This was no doubt due in part to the fact that Christians formed a sort of secret society and endeavored to render their mysteries inaccessible to the uninitiated. When Christianity became free and established, this symbolism was accentuated beyond all limits of prudence, and the Church continued to employ pictures and statues "to prepare the mind by an appeal to the emotions, and to introduce us to the abstract world of theological truth by means of figurative representations."

In doing this Christian art ran a double risk: that of concentrating the attention on the external expression to the extent of forgetting the mystical meaning; or, on the contrary, that of so exaggerating the mystical element that the external signs become unintelligible. We cannot say that this twofold danger has always been avoided, but it was avoided in the truly Christian period of the Middle Ages. Then all symbolism was clear for those who were deeply saturated with mystical religion and, we may add, in constant communion with

the divine principle of life. Then also the external manifestations of a religion which absorbed all the concerns of life did not run any risk of falling into paganism or becoming theatrical.

This is not the place to go into the details of this Christian symbolism, which may to-day be studied in histories of art. It is enough to remark that since its beginnings a double tendency has been manifest with the changing turns of fortune—now carrying Christian art toward realism, and again forcing it back toward idealism. All the "Reformers," particularly, felt compelled, one after the other, to discard everything that had been introduced that was too materialistic, too human, too sensual, too pagan. Their principle might have been correct; its application was often unfortunate, as are all the efforts of "restorers," who are above all iconoclasts.

In the first ages of Christianity Tertullian declared that the Passion was impossible to picture without giving scandal, because of the profundity of the mystery which is contained in it. At that time they displayed the cross alone without the crucified body, or a lamb offered in sacrifice. Finally, beginning only with the sixth century, the crucifixion appeared in the monuments. Are we to follow the example of Tertullian and drive out the crucifix from Christian churches, as it has already been expelled from the palaces of justice, hospitals and schools?

I shall repeat in this connection an observation which has already been made many times in this book. Let us not try to go back artificially and ignore a long and gradual evolution which took place as the result of natural causes. These criticisms of details

and forms seem to me to be just as vain. The impure see impurity everywhere; but for the pure all things are pure. We shall never prevent a Neapolitan peasant from regarding as a mere fetish the saint, who is for us a superhuman model. When it is a question of introducing into religious art a new element of materialism, let us strive to prevent it and cling to the very wise decree of the Council of Nicaea: "It is not for painters to invent the arrangement of figures; they ought to follow the standards and traditions of the Catholic Church." But when a usage has been consecrated by time it becomes conventional, and if we attempt to uproot it violently we perhaps run a greater risk of disturbing and destroying layers of living substance in which its roots have become deeply imbedded than if we leave it alone. That which has survived through many centuries has ordinarily a reason for being which our ignorant presumption does not always immediately perceive. It is enough in order that a passing fashion be given a fair trial to give it merely enough time to destroy itself. That is why I mistrust those theorists who wish every morning to reconstruct as a whole, from top to bottom, human thought, ways of living and the conventions of society.

And that is also one of the reasons for which we love the old churches—not only, as I have indicated,² for all the memories which they recall, and because "many souls have passed that way and prayed," but also because they have been built and for centuries kept up and enriched by faith. Of new churches we ask only that they express to us a similar act of faith,

² Pp. 106-07.

without troubling our minds with too violent discords in thought.

For the trait which essentially distinguishes Christian manifestations of art is that they live and triumph first of all through sentiment, through the intention, regardless of their artistic value. The music which is suitable for the Church is not the elaborate and learned compositions of our concert halls, with their complicated harmonies; it is the simple chant of a few women with cracked and untrained voices, as they sing their prayer to Mary of a May evening. By the side of the altar we are not touched by the clever combinations of a Jules Romain or by the plays of light and shade of a Carrache, but by the naïve interpretation of a fifteenth-century monk who is compelled to express the mercy of God or the glory of Paradise only as his heart imagines them.

Some modern artists have difficulty in recapturing this simple faith of a bygone day; and when they almost succeed their too visible efforts to forget momentarily what they cannot help knowing, and to rejuvenate the spirit of eight or ten centuries ago, have always an artificial note which jars on our senses. Their awkwardness is not due to ignorance, but to the will. They cannot confine themselves with sufficient sincerity to expressing what they think. They wish at the same time to think as men thought formerly. "They have come too late into a world too old." That is why recent or contemporary art is generally powerless to equal in our estimation the art of the Middle Ages; and that is why in our France, where almost always the poorest village possesses its church built centuries ago, we love these old churches, not because

the capitols of the columns have an antique value, but because even without examining the details we feel that the whole thing has been fashioned by love.

There is a beauty not of form, but of spirit, in the ancient rites, in the priestly acts, which all have a mystical meaning, and which have been transmitted unchanged across space and time by the soundless movements which accompany the plain-chant of the invisible Benedictines, in places consecrated by an immemorial worship in which, when we try to excavate, we discover the sanctuaries of all the centuries superimposed one upon another.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that man has need of a religion: that even when he made a cult of the reason he could not do without a faith. The very fact that all men seek an answer to the questions recognized by their reason as insoluble proves sufficiently that an answer to such questions is necessary to them.

Science touches only the world of the senses, and the provisional explanations of it which it attempts to give are themselves only hypotheses. None of the demonstrated hypotheses of science is contradictory to the religious hypothesis. When they appear temporarily to be so, that is not a fact of sufficient importance to upset us. We have only the right to affirm that our senses and our reason conceive the world *just as it is*. Rationally we are children, and children do not see as their father sees unless the father seeks to deceive them. Therefore it is not necessary to consider any realistic affirmation as demonstrated, and

if one of them offends the deepest sentiments of our heart, we should be absurd to surrender to it immediately. Perhaps the solutions which we vainly seek in this universe exist in another. And in our world the more penetrating and lucid minds may comprehend what is obscure to us.

This solution, which is so indispensable to men, has been for nearly two thousand years supplied by Christianity. Before that, paganism had its hour. Paganism in its best sense was the adoration of the Sun—the source of heat, illumination, life and fecundity. We have still among us some pagans for whom the only true religion is observation of and respect for nature. But when he stands face to face with this implacable nature, man finds himself withered and blinded by the torrid heat of a light without love. Christianity has offered to weary souls a refuge in the shadow, in the silent sweetness of the cloisters; isolation after the deafening tumult of the multitudes; spiritual peace after bodily conflicts.

For a century or two faith in Christianity has in turn seemed to give way. Is it possible, as has sometime been hoped and predicted, that a new religion may appear and take its place, just as Christianity itself was substituted for more ancient forms of worship? What more could this religion supply us in the domain of morals? We cannot even imagine. . . . In the metaphysical and spiritual domain? No new dogmas—that is certain (it is extremely unlikely that moderns would create new dogmas), but perhaps, on the contrary, less precision, fewer miracles, fewer formularies? . . . There would then be only negative modifications. Would our children be content

with a Christianity without Christ, with something in the way of a divine government resembling a limited monarchy? . . .

How could a really new religion, in the ordinary sense of the word, be originated and propagate itself? What prophet of Asia or of Africa would find men ready to follow him? We cannot invent a new religion any more than we can artificially elaborate a social régime, a morality, a law which will endure. It must develop spontaneously. The miraculous extension of Christianity necessitated, even humanly speaking, an exceptional combination of circumstances. Great moral revolutions may be preached and put in motion by certain thinkers; but they only succeed under the impulsion given them by multitudes still in their ignorance. Superficial intelligence is opposed to true faith, as pseudo-science is to the truth. To push conviction to the point of martyrdom demands an exceptional large-heartedness or a certain simplicity. The great streams of human life can be fed only by the ingenuousness of barbarians. There are hardly any more barbarians to invade civilization from without. Those who practice barbarism to-day are the degenerate intellectuals. A religion can only come from within our own borders. . . .

But this new religion of the poor, has it not already been born, has it not been rapidly developing under the name of socialism or communism? Socialism is indeed a religion of archaic formulas in modern guise, which requires of its adherents absolute submission of mind and body, complete servitude. It is propagated by fire and sword; it has its apostles, its martyrs, its inquisitors, its popes, who compensate for present

sacrifices by promises of future happiness. Among the masses of the people, among the sincerely devout, it tends to replace Christianity, "which has gone out of fashion." But do we see here any signs of progress? It is indeed a debased religion, in which there is question only of material and temporal advantages. . . .

Christianity as actually practiced may have had in other times, and may still retain certain defects which I am not concerned to deny, especially political defects. But it is enough to refer to the Gospel to see that these defects are there formally condemned. What are we to conclude from this, if not that men are men and that their coöperation weakens and degrades even the works which are divine in their origin?

Why should we depart from the religion of our fathers? It is an act of faith to believe in the divinity of Christ; but it is hardly an act of faith to believe in the existence of God and to believe that humanity has never approached the divine perfection as it did in the life and teaching of Christ. You who are unbelievers, read the Sermon on the Mount or the narrative of the Last Supper! . . . Read them over again, you whose faith is tottering! Christianity is, independent of all dogma, a work of ineffable beauty: a fountain of youth, at which even pagans have a right to drink, since, whatever they say of it, there is nothing in this water that ought to affect and trouble their reason. If one is so fortunate as to have begun his life with faith, he ought to thank heaven for it. Even if faith is lacking one may still approach Christianity—since nothing imposes on our minds a contrary faith—and find a lively consolation in the inspiration of its symbols, in the perfection of its morality, in the

marvelous poetical beauty of its legends, about which has crystallized for almost two thousand years everything of the good and the beautiful that has come to fruition in the human soul. . . .

All you who thirst for religion, who experience the sadness and the emptiness of earthly life, come to Christ! It is he who has said: "Ask and it shall be given you!" . . . Come to him in love, for that is his first law! Unite yourselves heart and soul to the divine Fatherhood! Base your lives on it and regulate your conduct by it in order that you may be able to enjoy eternal union with him. Experience will soon prove that it is the surest means of happiness that men have yet found.

Read and reread the Gospel! Understand it! Do what it commands you and you will be "Christian"! To that end there is no need that you torture your mind with texts and mysteries. Simply be disciples of Jesus Christ as if he were still on earth! The God and Father of Jesus Christ will not condemn you because of an unintentional error in theology; and it is not because of the strict observance of a rite or a meticulous faith that the Good Shepherd chooses his sheep. For he has said: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." And St. Paul said after him: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

"Salvation" is deliverance from evil and communion with God.

But if you can, do better still and enter a church! Enter and pray! If you feel the need of direction, support, counsel, consult a priest! Catholicism affords a precision, a certainty, a security which will bring you peace. It completes the Gospel with a commentary

which the practice and meditation of the faithful through many centuries have added to it. If your faith still remains unequal to Catholicism, Protestantism offers a freedom which respects your hesitations and doubts, and you can advance in it by gradual degrees somewhat like the stages in mysticism.

Jesus Christ has said: "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger. He that believeth in me shall never thirst." He also said: "I am the good shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep." He said further, in summing up all his teaching on the last night before his betrayal: "In my father's house are many mansions." These words are consoling to all those who wander in despair along the roads of doubt in search of eternal truth. In the strict sense of the word, many poor souls cry out to God from the depths of the abyss: "Out of the deep have I called unto thee." May God hear these souls and have mercy upon them! Then they will sing triumphantly: "When Israel came out of Egypt."

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